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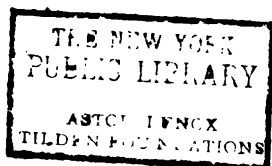
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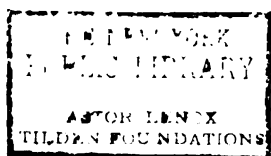
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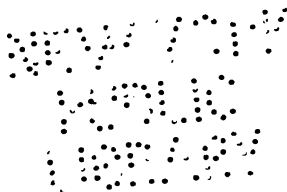
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CHRISTIE ELWOOD

AND

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HER FRIENDS.



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PART 1.

"THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN; FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILT-
LESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN."

CHRISTIE ELWOOD.

I.

“Awake, thou that sleepest !”

IT was drawing towards the close of a hot June afternoon. The level shadows were lying across the meadows, parted by bands of golden sunlight. All over the distance a soft, warm haze hung low, and “the whole earth was at rest and was quiet.” Even the buzz of the farm-yard was hushed; the cows had been driven out again after milking; the poultry abstained from their perpetual clack; and even Punch, the little terrier, whose bark was as sharp and decisive as the crack of a rifle, had apparently resolved that, for once, he and the world should be on good terms with each other. In the wide, cool porch, which opened directly into the family kitchen, sat Christie Elwood, just come in

from her milking—a pretty picture, as she leaned her brown head against the wall, and sat still to rest, her hands lying idly in her lap. None of the vanities of modern toilettes had reached Christie in her quiet farm-house; and, certainly, no extended train or flowered bonnet could have become her so well as the short gray skirts, and easy fitting body, whose white undersleeves were tucked up high on the round, mottled arms. She was the very picture of an English girl of the good old times, all the pleasanter now for its extreme rareness.

Christie was a little tired that afternoon, and sat still for some minutes. Presently she began:

‘There’s to be a reading, or a lecture, or something, over at Farmer Hopper’s to-night, in his little barn. I’m thinking I’d like to go.’

“What’s it about, child?” said her mother. “I don’t know who’d care to come preaching down here. We don’t get much in the way o’ sermons hereabouts.”

“I don’t think it’s a sermon, mother; it is more like talking, I fancy. It’s the young

squire from over at Mallenden ; he's just coming to read a bit. I feel as if I'd like to hear something good."

Mrs. Elwood looked quickly across at her daughter. It had struck her more than once, lately, that Christie had not seemed so strong as usual, and had sometimes complained ; and the very expression of a desire to "hear something good," brought back to the mother's heart the cold breath of a doubt which had swept over her more than once. Christie was the child of her old age, and was the very "apple of their eye" to both father and mother.

"There's naught against your going, child," she said. "Why, we might all go. Father'd like it, I'm sure, and it would make a bit of a change for Tom, too. Who told you about it?"

"It was Jack," said Christie, a flush coming over her face, "cousin Jack."

"Then I sha'n't go," muttered Tom, under his breath.

"Hast thee seen him?" asked the old man, rousing himself from the half-doze into which he had fallen on the opposite seat.

"Yes, father. He came over on horseback from Squire Staunton's, with a message to Martin. I was down at the low gate when he came by; so he stopped and told me about this, and asked if we'd like to go, for the young squire was going to read to Farmer Hopper's men."

"Jack might have come in to see us, I think," said Mrs. Elwood, rather querulously.

"He didn't stop above a minute, mother. He bade me give you and father his love, and say he'd have liked to have come in, but he'd orders not to stop anywhere, and be back quick."

"What's come over Jack?" asked her father. "I never knew *him* mind his orders before in all my life. If that lad had a will to do a thing, he'd do it, never mind who said him 'nay.'"

"I can't think what it is, father, but there's something on him. When he told me he couldn't stay, and I said 'Never mind; come in a minute,' he looked at me quite grave, and said, 'I can't, Christie;' and yet he was smiling, and looked happier than I ever saw him before. He said he'd a deal to tell us

some time; something the young squire had done to him since he came home from the wars."

"There ain't no wars just now," said Tom, with some severity, from within the kitchen.

Christie tossed her head rather pettishly; she had reigned supreme too long to brook anything in the way of contradiction. "You needn't take a body up like that, Tom. I just mean, he's been away in foreign parts, India or somewhere; and I'm sure I don't know what soldiers go to such places for, if it's not to fight. At all events he's come home; and Jack says he's another man, and some wonderful things have happened; and I mean to go to-night, Tom. You needn't come, though, if you don't like. Nobody wants you," added the little tyrant, as she swept through the kitchen, and began setting down the tea things with a pleasant clatter. Poor Tom! he was her father's only nephew, and for years past had been a member of the High Farm household—a good, hard-working fellow, stolid and reserved, but still a very slave to all his cousin's whims and caprices.

Christie returned to the charge after tea.

"Now, father, you'll have to let Tom and the lads do your work to-night, for you're going to take mother and me out; there's a dear daddy. And Debby will lay supper for me; won't you, Debby? unless you'll come too, will you?"

"No-a," said Debby, considering, "I guess not. I'm not much for such things." It was a wonderful speech for Deborah, who was chiefly remarkable for her powers of silence. She never used two words if it were possible to explain her meaning by one, nor would she even open her lips, if a nod or gesture would suffice. She was a tall, gaunt woman, with a grave face, and dark-gray hair dragged back under her cap.

"Then you and Tom can amuse each other," said Christie, haughtily; and disappeared down the long passage, glints of sunshine falling upon her figure, through open doors and windows, till she disappeared up the narrow staircase.

By a little after seven, she set out with her father and mother; for though eight was the appointed hour, the High Farm was at some distance from the little village where the meeting

was to be held, and Mrs. Elwood must not be hurried. The whole expedition had in it something of excitement to the restless Christie. It was not very often that she even went to church. To begin with, it was even farther off than Farmer Hopper's at the other end of the village; and alas! the clergyman was not one who preached to the hearts of his hearers. None of them knew anything of that strong and tender tie which sometimes binds minister and people together, and thrills like a harp-string Sunday after Sunday, as they see their friend and counsellor, the recipient and sharer of their joys and sorrows, stand up as God's ambassador to speak to them in His name. Christie had never in her life heard such words from the pulpit, or, indeed, from any other place, for their clergyman had never even entered their door; and, therefore, it was not very wonderful that she often chose to stay at home all Sunday, going round the fields with her father, or reading the few books which they possessed, or perhaps turning over the pictures in the old family Bible, and occasionally repeating the Catechism to her mother,

with as dim an idea of its meaning as when she was a child. But as they drew near their destination, a sense of shyness and awe came upon her. She could not forget the change in her favorite cousin; and he had told her that very wonderful things had happened. What could it mean? She became very silent, and dropped behind her father when, at the entrance to the farm, they met Mr. Hopper himself. He was a fine, cheery, broad-chested man, of about fifty, who greeted them warmly; and the two farmers walked on together. As Christie rustled through the farm-yard straw, she caught part of their conversation; for her father was rather hard of hearing, and consequently his companion spoke even a little more loudly than he was wont.

“Yes; he’s a fine young gentleman, the captain; and I didn’t see how I could refuse him when he came and asked, though I’m sure I can’t imagine what should make him care to come all them five miles and back again. This now’ll be the fourth time he’s come; and I will say I never heard things put so plain before. Bless you, it’s as clear as daylight.”

Then there was a question which was lost, followed by the answer.

"He come over on horseback one day, and come into the field after me, and talked a goodish long time about my youngest son, who's a sergeant now in his troop, and has been writing me letters full of religion these twelve months. Then he told me that he had promised Ted he would try and do us some good while he was home; and would I let him come over once a week and read with my men in the little barn? and, to tell the truth," said the farmer, lowering his voice, as they reached the door and drew together, "he gave me such a talking to about myself, as I've not had this five-and-twenty years, not since I buried my poor old mother."

"There's a good many coming," remarked Mrs. Elwood.

"Yes; there weren't but just my men the first time, but they took to it amazingly, and brought their wives, some of them, next time. And I suppose they gossiped about it, as women always will, eh, Christie? and so now there's a

goodish lot. But just go in, will you? and make yourselves as comfortable as you can."

It was of the simplest, most homely nature, that service in the little barn, where "two or three" met together in Jesus' name. Captain Staunton made no pretensions to "preaching;" he sat at a little table in one corner, with a small Bible in his hand, and talked, as Christie had never heard any human lips talk, of the great realities of heaven and hell, and the possession of an undying soul. She had been thrilled by his opening prayer; it really seemed as though he were talking to God, and fully expected Him to hear; and as he spoke, a whole new world seemed to open before her. Hitherto she had lived a life as careless and worldly as that of any London beauty; for Christie was fond of fun and admiration, and had plenty of both. Yet, through it all, she had sometimes been conscious of a dim longing and craving after things that could not be shaken. "God had made her for Himself, and her soul must needs be restless till it rested in Him."

The parable of the Prodigal Son, that wonder-

ful unfolding of the very heart of God's love, which has taken captive so many rebellious human hearts, was the subject. She had read it before, but never with the slightest understanding of its inner meaning; and as that was unveiled to her, the Spirit of God, little as she then knew it, showed her herself. She sat near the wide-open door, a little turned away from the speaker, looking out upon the broad landscape, which slowly faded from green to gray, and then sank into the purple of night; but her heart was strangely at variance with the quiet around. For the first time in her life, Christie "came to herself;" she had not yet "come to her Father."

There was another prayer at the end; and with the echoes of the hymn still sounding in her ears, Christie picked her way through the yard behind her father and mother. The moon was getting up and it was a starry night, so that their way home lay clear before them. Not a word was spoken till neighborly 'good-nights' had been exchanged at the gate; and the three started on their solitary road. Then her father spoke.

"Well, mother, how did you like it?"

"O Elwood, I'm afraid we've been just for all the world like that run-a-way boy. I never heard anything like it in all my life; there! a child could have understood. And to think I've lived all my life very little better nor a poor dumb creature, and never so much as thought I wasn't safe!"

"I don't know about that. It seems to me as that young captain drew the line a good bit too sharp. I've never done no harm to any one, and paid my way, and been a good husband and father, never was the worse for liquor in my life; and if God Almighty don't make some account of all that, I don't know what more a man can do."

It was to but small purpose that Mrs. Elwood tried to communicate to her husband even the glimmer of light which had entered her own mind.

"It didn't seem to me as if God was hard upon us, as the squire put it," she said. "I never so much as dreamed before of God's really caring for us. Eh! but I wish I was sure He cared for me."

"Well, I *do* call it hard," returned the old man, "for me to be put along with regular bad livers, and told we've got to be saved just in the same way as them. No, no; that won't hold water. I'll never believe, so long as I live, that God Almighty will make no account of an honest man's trying to do his best. I've never done no harm; and if I mayn't expect a little mercy when I come to die, I don't know who should."

Meanwhile Christie walked on silently; but a long, fierce struggle was beginning that night in her soul. She could not, would not, believe that she was all that she heard described, and yet her conscience told her that her whole life had been lived away from God, and that she had never loved Him. She was distinctly sensible of nothing but confusion. As yet everything within her was only "without form and void;" but the Spirit of God was beginning to "move upon the face of the waters." For the first time, for many months, she repeated the prayer of her childhood beside her bed, and then knelt on, unable to pray in words of her own, yet with a dull sense of

misery upon her, which made the very attitude a relief; and truly, if prayer be "the burden of a sigh," Christie Elwood prayed earnestly that night.

"I've found the pearl of greatest price,
 My heart doth sing for joy ;
 And sing I must, for Christ I have,
 Oh, what a Christ have I !"

OLD HYMN.

THERE was a sort of hush over the High Farm next day. Very little was said regarding the previous night ; but when Christie came abruptly into the front kitchen on her way to the afternoon milking, she surprised her mother sitting over the large, rarely-used Bible, with the big tears falling down on its pages. Christie stepped over, and gave her a silent kiss—a rare demonstration—and then went out to her cows with a heavy heart, feeling as if all the sunshine had been taken out of her life. At first she submitted to this, but after a day or two she wearied of the burden, and only strove to forget it, determining in her own mind that she

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would not go to the barn the next week. She was almost vexed when, on Saturday night, her mother announced her intention of going to church next morning ; and when there, she found herself listening with a strange new interest to all that went on. There were many things in the prayer and lessons which caught her attention ; and although the sermon, being on the dangers of great wealth, was entirely unsuited to her, she returned home with the solemn feelings of the previous week considerably restored. She felt rather shy of her mother, but in the afternoon, by her wish, went through the catechism, and then sat silently for some time on the door step at her feet. Presently the old woman spoke.

“Christie, dear, I’m afraid father didn’t much like the reading on Wednesday ; but you’ll come with me this week, won’t you ? even if he doesn’t care to go.”

“Yes, mother, if you wish it.”

“I just feel as if I could get no rest, lass. It’s my sins that trouble me, and I don’t see how I’m to be rid of them. Eh ! I’ve been a wicked woman.”

"Don't fret, mother."

"I can't help it, Christie. But here's father, and you'd best not talk of it before him; only you'll come along with me on Wednesday, there's a dear lassie."

Christie could not refuse; and then it came to pass that she again found herself among the listeners. The words spoken were very quiet, but they pierced her through; and she knew when she turned away from the barn, that the iron had entered into her very soul. Her mother had caught at the hope of the infinite love of God in Christ, though not yet daring to believe in it for herself; but Christie could see nothing but darkness. She felt as if a chain were slowly coiling around her which would eventually shut her up to the knowledge that she was lost; and with all the strength of her young, proud nature, she fought against the conviction, retreating from one stronghold into another, and striving to hide herself anywhere from the gaze of the all-seeing eye of God.

So the week wore away. Christie too began to feel that strange yearning after the neglected

Book, which now lay very often upon her mother's little round table; but she was too shy to be seen reading it; and it was only by snatches that she glanced into its pages. At last, on the Saturday night, she found a small Bible in the corner of one of the kitchen cupboards, and with an eagerness which surprised herself, caught it up, and ran with it to her room. Just then she heard her father's voice calling her, and hurried down; but as she turned the corner of the steep staircase, her foot slipped, and with a cry of pain she fell to the bottom. "It was not much; only a shake," Christie said; but she trembled a good deal; and when she tried to walk, she found she could not move without her father's help, for her left ankle was badly sprained. She had some tender, regretful thoughts of what a good mother it was, and how little she had repaid all her love, as the old woman and Debby bathed the swollen foot, and applied the little household remedies. "It was nothing very serious," Debby said, who was an oracle in such matters. "Christie would need to content herself with sitting still a bit

more for a while ; but she'd soon be about again. Cold water and bandages, that was the thing ; and she'd be all right again soon enough."

One thing, however, was clear. Christie could not go to church next day ; and she began to fear, too, that she could never walk so far as the village even by Wednesday ; and with the knowledge that she was deprived of the means of grace, came the most burning desire to hear more. Then she remembered how much Captain Staunton had said about proving everything by the Bible ; and thought that she would try, and find the same comfort in it as her mother did. So, in the morning, when the old people were gone to church, and Debby was safe in the back kitchen, and Tom had betaken himself and his pipe to the fields, she ventured to the old Bible, turning over the familiar pictures now as things of small moment. On the whole, Christie was disappointed by her morning's reading. There was very much that was altogether unintelligible to her ; and though, no doubt, many a little ray of light crept through the chinks of her closed heart, she was too unfamiliar with both

help listening, though she sat apart, taking no share in the conversation, and knitting at her stocking as though the fate of empires depended on her turning the heel within a given time.

"Oh, then, you've been," said Jack. "I'm right glad of it. I was just praying that I might meet some one of you to tell you about it that afternoon, and then, who should I see but Christie, standing at the low gate."

"Why didn't thee come in that day, Jack?" asked his uncle, who had not quite forgotten what he conceived to be a slight.

"I couldn't, sir. You know how particular the squire is; and," with a heightened color, "you know I've not been used to be very particular about orders, so he told me expressly that I was just to go to Martin's and back, and not be loitering about on the way."

"I hope you've asked leave to come to-day," broke in Christie, with a touch of sarcasm in her voice.

"Yes, I did," said Jack, very quietly.

"What's come over you?" asked the old man abruptly, after staring at him for a minute.

"I don't know how to tell you, uncle. It's the most wonderful thing in the whole world; I'm a new man altogether. It's what the Bible calls conversion."

"Ah! I heard the captain say that word more than once," said Mrs. Elwood.

"And well he may, aunt. Why, you wouldn't know him for the same he was when he went abroad. There wasn't anybody more up to all the doings at the Court then; he'd be tearing over the country all the day, and dancing and smoking half the night. I remember how, a good three years or more ago, I heard the butler and the head-groom laughing about some letters he'd been writing to the squire, saying he was turned religious; and how angry they said he was, and the missus too, and that the squire had said he wouldn't have any such nonsense in his house, and if Mr. Harry—he wasn't captain then—was going on like that, he'd best stay away. However, I heard no more of it, and I'd altogether forgotten it, till he came home a month or two ago; and then you may depend upon it, we heard enough of it.

I don't mean he talked big; but the first thing almost he asked the squire was to let him have prayers of a morning, and have us all in. I don't suppose there'd ever been such a thing since the Court was built, unless perhaps there was a clergyman more particular than usual in the house; and there wasn't many of that sort came there. However, one morning, we were all sent for, and had into the library; and there was the captain and two of the young ladies, and he just read a chapter and made a prayer. I couldn't tell you what didn't come over me then; and though there'd been a good bit of laughing as we went in, we was all quiet enough when we came out. I saw the housekeeper wiping her eyes; and she told the cook that he was for all the world like his own mother that's dead, and that she believed it was all along of her prayers for him, when she was dying, and said that she should leave her one little lamb to the Good Shepherd. Them were the very words."

Jack paused. It was a long speech even for him, and his feelings were somewhat moved.

“Well?” asked his aunt.

“Well, they’ve kept on with them prayers to this blessed day, though there’s not so many of the servants come, now the freshness has gone off; and Miss Charlotte is often late. But sometimes one or two of the ladies as is staying in the house will come; but the squire and missus never. It was that praying that first made me begin to feel different; but I don’t believe that alone would have done it. I was just thinking about myself, but no more, till one day the captain sent orders for me to go out with him. I wondered at that, for he’d always gone alone before; but when we’d got quite over on Chidwell Hill, (for we was going to Chidwell Park,) he pulls up his horse, and calls to me to come up to him, and then he giver me such a talking to as I never had in all my days.”

“What did he say?” asked Mrs. Elwood, eagerly.

“I couldn’t tell you the half of it. I don’t remember it myself now, but I suppose it was pretty much what he says at the meeting, only

with the difference that it was all straight at me, and I couldn't shift it off on any one else's shoulders. Ye see, it wasn't as if there'd been a lot of people there, and I could have turned round at them in my mind, and said, 'That's for you;' but there it was, all for myself, Jack Rawdon; and I couldn't get out of it, no how. I don't believe ten thousand sermons or meetings would have done for me what that talking did. He said a deal to me about what a shame it was for young men like him and me to go and give all the best of our lives to Satan and to pleasing ourselves, and then think we'd get God to let us into heaven just at the last. I mind very well one thing he said, for it's stuck by me since; and I've often thought how true it was. 'John,' says he, 'you may have heaven before ever you get there, and enjoy it too.' Well, then, he asked me, had I never thought as how God loved me? I told him I couldn't say as ever I'd had a thought that way, till just lately; and then he talked to me, till I felt as if my heart was just running over with tears, and I could have cried like a big baby, about how He had loved me all

along, and how the Lord Jesus came and died for me. I wanted sorely to get hold of it for myself, for I see plain enough he'd got something I'd not got; and my heart was like lead; it was so heavy. But though I could say, 'That's you, Jack Rawdon,' when he talked of how bad I'd been, I couldn't say, 'That's you,' when he talked of God loving me. Well, when we were getting close up to the house, he says to me, 'You can get forgiveness to-day, John, if you go and ask God to give it you for Jesus' sake, for He says He's "ready to forgive."' And with that he told me he shouldn't want the horses again till four o'clock, and we turned round the corner, and I went behind, as my place was. I took the horses round to the stables, and put them up; but my heart was that full I could speak to nobody; and when they asked me to come in to dinner, I said I'd particular business, and shouldn't be back till I had to saddle again. So then, I went away into one of the covers, where I knew nobody would come, and I just went down on my knees, and prayed God to forgive me. I couldn't never tell what a three

hours that was; I just didn't know what to do; and sometimes I thought I'd give it all up, and go and have a pint and forget it. Then I'd think of the captain's words, 'You can get forgiveness to-day,' and I thought I'd never give up. I couldn't explain to you how it came at last; it was when I was thinking of where it says, 'Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish;' and I just believed straight away, and told Him that if He'd let me, I'd love and serve Him for ever, for I couldn't help it, when He had loved me so. And it seemed then as if all the weight of Chidwell Hill was gone off me, and I were as light as a bird; and thinks I to myself, 'Heaven is begun already.' I never knew before that God loved me."

Jack's voice was a little husky now, and he dashed the back of his hand across his eyes.

No one spoke; so he went on.

"I've loved Him ever since; and that's why I couldn't do things now that I used to do. I haven't got the heart to them; for I think to myself what the captain so often says, 'The first duty of a soldier is obedience;' and God's my

King now, and I daren't disobey Him ; and oh ! He makes me so happy."

Tom had come in soon after Jack's story began, and had stood by the fireplace as silent as Christie. Now he gave a sort of grunt, turned on his heel, and went out. The other young man rose too. "I ought to be going, aunt ; I've no more than time to ride home. But oh, I do so want you, and uncle, and Christie to be as happy as I am."

"I wish I were, Jack," said the old woman, sighing, as she clasped the young strong hand between her two withered ones. He looked down at her with a look such as her own son might have given her.

"Dear auntie, it's ever so easy. Jesus says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' " And then he kissed her, shook hands with his uncle and cousin, and was gone.

Debby, sitting in the back kitchen, had heard every word.

III.

' This is His will : He takes and He refuses,
Finds Him ambassadors whom men deny ;
Wise ones, nor mighty, for His saints He chooses,
No, such as John, or Gideon, or I."

F. W. H. MYERS.

WHEN Wednesday morning came, it brought with it to Christie's unwilling mind the conviction that, though her ankle was much better, it would be impossible for her to walk down to Corfield ; nor could she drive in the little gig, for her father had to go to a market-town some ten miles off to buy cattle, and would not be home till late at night. Mrs. Elwood grew dolorous over the state of matters generally at the breakfast-table ; she was nervous about walking through the lanes after dark, and yet determined not to give up going. Christie looked across at her cousin.

"Tom," she said, suddenly, "why don't you go along with mother?"

"Not I," answered Tom, gruffly. Then recovering himself, he added, "No offence to you, aunt; but I'm never going to that place, so long as I live, nor to church neither; so it's not a bit of use anybody a-persuading of me. When I says a thing, I means it."

The delivery of this oracular statement was followed by silence, for no one quite knew what to say. Then Christie's old spirit re-asserted itself.

"Upon my word, Tom, I always did think you the worst-tempered fellow I knew, but I didn't think you'd set on to mother like that. Even if you wont go in, you might just as well take her and fetch her home; and you and Tim Hopper could have a pipe while you're waiting."

Debby here cut short the discussion.

"I'll go along o' yer, missus. Don't waste no more words about it."

"There, there, my dear, let Tom alone, do," said Mrs. Elwood, seeing that her daughter was by no means disposed for peace. "Debby and

I'll do nicely together, and I shall be a deal more comfortable, than as if I thought Tom was fidgeting for it to be over all the time." And so the matter rested.

Later on in the morning, when Christie was paring potatoes in the back kitchen, she heard Debby sigh over her rolling-pin and flour, and the sound recalled a question which she had been revolving more or less since breakfast-time.

"Debby," she said, "what are you going along with mother for?"

The question was rather abrupt ; and the old woman hesitated.

"Well," she answered, after a while, "I'm beginning to think it's about time I looked after myself a bit, since I heard all that lad was a-saying yesterday. But look here, Christie, I don't want no talking about it. Just let things be. No good ever came of talking."

It was drawing near ten o'clock that night, and Christie grew somewhat anxious about her mother, for there were threatenings of a storm, and a few heavy drops fell more than once. She went down to the garden gate to listen. Presently

she heard wheels, and the steady beat of the old horse's feet against the hard road ; and when the gig drew up she saw that her mother and Debby were in it. Her father threw down the reins, and got slowly out.

"Here we are, my girl, all right. I got away earlier than I looked for ; so I thought I'd give mother a surprise, and went round by Corfield and picked them up."

"The meeting must have been later than usual, mother."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Elwood, with a kiss. And then Christie felt that her face was wet with tears. But there was a bright quietude about her whole manner, which had never been there before ; and though nothing of importance was said during supper, Christie felt pretty sure that her mother had found the peace after which she was herself so vainly striving. She felt heart-sick and tired, and went up-stairs directly her part of washing up the supper things was finished. In a few minutes her mother knocked at the door, came in and sat down on the low bed. Christie went to her, and kneeling down, put her

arms round her, and laid her weary head on her shoulder.

“Well, mother,” she said, presently ; and then she felt the warm tears dropping gently down.

“It’s all so wonderful,” said the mother at last, “but I’ve no manner of doubt about it, lassie. The good Lord says He is ready to forgive for Jesus’ sake ; and I’m sure He’s forgiven me, and given me a new heart, even such an old sinner as me. I can’t think how I never saw it before, but it’s all as clear as glass to me now ; and the captain says it’s because God has sent the Holy Ghost to show it to us. Oh dear, how will I ever be grateful enough !”

“Why, mother, did Captain Staunton speak to you ?”

“Yes, my dear. I couldn’t tell you how kind he was to me. This was how it came about. Debby went out quick, directly we’d sung, but I stopped a bit to ask Mrs. Smith after her little boy, as was run over last week. He’s not much hurt, poor little lad. Well, when I come away, the captain was down by the door, waiting for his horse, for I think he was in a hurry to be gone

to-night ; and just as I got behind him, he steps back, to let some one pass, right against me. And with that he turned round sharp, and said, 'I beg your pardon,' and took off his cap just as if I'd been the Queen herself. So I curtsied, and he said he hoped he'd not hurt me, and then that he was afraid I'd found the room very hot, and had I come a long way? I told him it was a good bit over two mile, but I'd come twice as far any day to hear such good words. 'Oh,' says he, looking very pleased, 'then you like to hear about our Lord? I hope you love Him.' Well, I told him I wished I could ; but my heart was every bit as dull as a stone, and I didn't think there was any hope for such a wicked old woman as me. Just then, Mr. Hopper's man come up with his horse, and touched his arm to tell him it was there ; but he says, 'Not yet; hold him a bit ;' and then he turned back into the room, and set a chair for me, just as if I'd been his own mother, and sat down and talked to me."

Her tears began to flow again.

"There now, I don't know what I'm crying

for, unless it's for joy. He was out with that little Bible of his almost before I knew, and showed me one verse after another, till I couldn't for shame help believing that God must have meant it, when He'd had it all written down for us. And, my dear, then he talked to me that beautiful about trying to keep God's commandments now, and pleasing Him; and said that the Lord Jesus would be with me always, and everything I did I might do for Him. And I'm sure it's all true, for the Bible said it all, only I didn't know where to find the places myself."

How strange it seemed to Christie, this new-found joy, into which she could not enter! "Have you told father about it!" she asked.

"Yes; I just told him everything coming home. My stopping to talk with the young squire made me late; and we hadn't gone much past the corner when the gig overtook us; so I had plenty of time to tell him everything. I don't think he quite knew what I meant; but he said, 'Thee couldn't be a better wife than thee has been, lass; and I daresay this won't make thee a worse.' He was very kind."

Some time after her mother had gone away, Christie suddenly remembered that in the morning she had bid her set the mouse-trap in the front kitchen cupboard, for the mice had been at the candles. It was late, but she knew where the trap was to be found ; so she slipped quietly down-stairs. To her surprise, when she reached the foot of the staircase and turned into the long passage, she saw that the kitchen door, at the further end, was open, and a light was still burning. Her father was sitting at the white deal table, bending, not over his newspaper or account books, but over the big Bible, in which he was so absorbed, that her hushed movements had not disturbed him. He was not asleep either, as she first thought ; for as she looked, he turned over a leaf. She had never seen her father touch that book before, as long as she could remember ; and a strange flutter came to her heart, and the tears to her eyes. Then she stole quietly up-stairs again ; and the mice were free to hold carnival among the candles another night.

By Sunday, Christie was well enough to go

with her father and mother to church. The old rector preached about the judgment-day; and in her present state of mind, every text he quoted seemed to be only written to condemn her. In the church-yard they met Mrs. Hopper.

"That was the most solemn sermon I've heard from our rector this good bit," she said, after the first salutations were over. "I can't tell how it is, but since we've had the young squire coming to our house, I can't feel comfortable and easy-like in church, as I used to be. I'm always a-listening for something, and I declare that sermon this morning gave me the creeps all over."

"I tell you what I was a-thinking of all the time, neighbor," said Mrs. Elwood, "that the Judge would be my Friend, and so I didn't fear but He'd bring me safe off; and I was so busy trusting of Him that I a'most forgot to be afraid."

Christie thought a great deal of these words. She knew how often her mother had been terrified by the thought of death, "and after that, the judgment;" and it seemed a strange thing

that she should have forgotten to fear. Oh, if *she* could only feel the rest of knowing and believing the love of God!

The next afternoon, she put her head into the dairy, where her mother was busy, and told her that she was going down to see Mrs. Hopper's niece, who was staying with her aunt at Corfield. She wanted a change; and perhaps she shouldn't come back till after tea; Debby had promised to see to the milking.

Christie was a great favorite with the Hoppers, and always found a welcome in their house. To-day it was even warmer than usual, for Nelly Brown had been her chief friend from their childhood, and was as pleased to tell, as her guest was to hear, all the wonderful things which she had seen when she went to Paris with her mistress in the winter. It was as good as a fairy-tale, and Christie was thoroughly happy. They were sitting together in the parlor, whither they had gone to see the present Nelly had brought her aunt, when the figure of the old rector suddenly appeared before the open window, which must be passed on the

way to the front door. The girls were considerably awed, for the clergyman was but a rare visitor even at Corfield Farm ; and Christie had never spoken to him in her life. However, there was no escape, for he had seen them ; and almost before they had recovered from their surprise, Mrs. Hopper had brought in her visitor.

He was a kind-hearted old gentleman, with a benignant, though somewhat ceremonious manner.

"So, I understand, you are having great doings here, Mrs. Hopper," he said, after the usual opening inquiries after her own health, and the well-being of her husband and children.

"Indeed, sir," she answered, in some confusion, "I do hope, as you've no objection, sir. My husband couldn't well refuse"—

"Not at all, not at all, Mrs. Hopper ; I am perfectly aware of the state of matters. Captain Staunton has behaved extremely properly, very much so. He came and spoke to me about it first, and begged to know if I had any objection to his reading with your men. I confess I can't see any occasion for it myself ; but still there is

no harm in it, and, perhaps, on the whole, he might be worse employed, Mrs. Hopper."

"Yes, indeed, sir," said the good woman, visions of the doings of the wild young men who usually frequented Mallenden Court coming before her, till a smile passed over her honest face.

"Ah! I see," said the old gentleman, with a little nod. "Well, you know, Mrs. Hopper, young men will be young men; but I believe my godson has sown his wild oats now. Yes, he's my godson, and I have always felt an interest in him for his poor mother's sake, though I certainly never expected anything of this sort. My own view is, Mrs. Hopper, that when I have given you two good sermons on the Sunday, I have done my duty by you, and you have quite enough to do to practice them in the week. Still, as I said, I see no harm in Captain Staunton's amusing himself in this way, if he pleases; and it passes away an evening nicely for you."

"I am sure, sir," said Mrs. Hopper, gathering courage, "it's done a deal of good to us. You

never see a man so changed as my husband is. He's always a-reading of his Bible, and quite pleased when Sunday comes and it's time to go to church."

"Yes, yes, I must say I have felt gratified to see that the attendance at church has certainly increased. I remarked your husband, Mrs. Hopper, on Sunday, and one of my objects in calling to-day was to tell you I was glad of it."

"I'm sure, sir, I'm very much obliged to you. You see, it were this way with Hopper. I was always a good one for my church; but, as to him, he'd rather by far sit at home with his pipe and his mug of beer. However, after the captain had been coming a bit, I see him very much changed, more serious-like. And, a fortnight ago come Wednesday, the captain came in and sat in the kitchen, a good bit after the meeting, talking to my husband. And Hopper, he told him as he'd like to live a new life, and he'd been trying to believe, but he couldn't tell how it was he wasn't so content and happy as Jack Rawdon and Stephen Hepburn, and one or two more is. They'd a good bit of

talk about that, though I'll not trouble you with it all, and bless me, I couldn't remember the half of it myself. But, when he was going away, the captain says—'Never you mind so much about your feelings. You ain't as young as they; and feelings ain't everything. You keep on seeking God, and you're sure to find; and the way of His commandments is the best place to wait for Him in.' That took my husband's fancy mightily. He said he knew that keeping the commandments wouldn't never make up for all the times he'd broke them, and there wasn't but one thing that could save him; but still he said, if a man was really in earnest, he shouldn't be ashamed to show it, and to give up his bad ways. And so he come along with me to church the next Sunday, and last Sunday too."

"Well, well, I'm glad to hear it. Perhaps it would be a good thing if we were all a little more in earnest. Good day, Mrs. Hopper; good day to you." And the courtly old gentleman took his leave.

Christie felt almost cross; everywhere the

same subject met her. She plunged into talk with Nelly again, and allowed herself no thought till tea was over; and she started on her homeward way, Farmer Hopper driving her to the gate in his light cart. When she got in, only Tom and her father were in the kitchen; but beside the Bible, on her mother's round table, lay a large book in a handsome red cover.

"What's that?" she asked, and opening it, read on the title-page, "The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to Come;" and on the opposite fly-leaf was written, in a good bold hand, "Mrs. Elwood, from H. M. Staunton," and the date.

Just then her mother came in. "Ah, child!" she said, "so you've got back, and you've seen my book. Isn't it a beauty?"

"That it is, mother; a real beauty. But where did it come from?"

"I'm so vexed you were out, Christie. Who should come riding up this afternoon, but Captain Staunton himself, all the way from Mallenden, and that great book under his arm. And he stayed ever so long talking to father and

me; and father says he's a-going on Wednesday."

"Well, yes," said the old man, "that young gentleman put things a bit different to-day, and I'm thinking perhaps he's not so far wrong. Anyhow, I'll go and see, and I'll read the books." And from that time the two old people began reading the Bible and the large "Pilgrim's Progress" together, every evening.

It was but very gradually that Elwood's mind opened to receive the truth; still the progress, though slow, was steady. To his wife the promise of "light at eventide" was made good. Her naturally even, tranquil nature seemed to bask in the sense of God's love, and the former kindness of her disposition mellowed into that sacred "love of the brethren," which an apostle gave as a sign of the accomplishment of the wondrous passage "from death unto life." Her chief sorrow was her daughter, who grew fitful and restless; evidently wearying for better things, and yet striving to stifle her convictions by an intense attention to trifles. Nor would she allow even her mother to speak to her upon

the subject, but, in the expressively homely phrase, "kept herself to herself."

"Here's some one for you, master," said Debby, one evening, opening the front kitchen door just wide enough to admit the frills of her cap. "Hepburn, he says his name is."

"Oh! the foreman from the quarry. Ask him to step in. It's about the stone for that new wall," he explained to his wife; "and he couldn't tell me this morning; so he said he'd come up to-night."

The name struck Christie as one she had heard before; but it was not until a tall figure appeared in the door-way, that she recognized the bearer of it as a constant attendant at the barn, and remembered that Mrs. Hopper had spoken some time since of Stephen Hepburn as "one of the happy ones." It *was* a happy face, sealed with the very peace of God, which crowned the massive well-knit frame; and when, after the business matters were over, he and her mother began to talk together, it soon became evident that he too was one who knew "the language of Canaan." Even Tom, who generally

manifested his dislike of such subjects by leaving the room when they were introduced, condescended to remain, and had evidently taken a fancy to the new comer. He was one who, like Jack, had discovered, within the last few months, "the great love wherewith God loved him," and was serving Him "with joyfulness and with gladness of heart." He spoke but little of himself; it was a different nature to Jack's, far less demonstrative, but calm and steadfast. Incidentally, however, he told them that his parents had been Christian people, and that he had thought himself very religious; "but it wasn't God's religion," he added. "I just worshipped a God of my own making, who, I fancied, was too loving to punish sin. I had got hold of a good many books full of that sort of thing, and I read very little else, and almost entirely gave up my Bible. I'd never read it for pleasure, only just because I'd promised my mother I would; and I got at last to think that she and all the other good people were mistaken, and mine was the best religion. I can see now that it was because I had so little idea of what sin

really is, and what God's holiness is. Ah! but it was awful work when I found that out; and then I'd not one word to say against the death of Christ. I just felt that all that He ever did, and all the blood He shed, wasn't one drop too much to wash out my sins."

"I do love that prayer we have in church," he said, in the course of the evening, "where it speaks about God's service being 'perfect freedom.' I'm sure it's true. I never knew what real happiness was, till I found it in Jesus; and there's never been a cloud since I first believed. It's just brighter and brighter every day."

Then he told of the little Sunday-school, which some of them had begun in Corfield. Not far from Farmer Hopper's lived a little old maid, Miss Sharpe by name, who had been a true Christian for many years, but had never thought of the privilege and duty of personal service for God, until awakened up to it by Captain Staunton's words and example. During the forty years of the rector's ministry, there had never been a Sunday-school. He was unmarried; and there was no gentleman's family

in the place. Almost all the property belonged to Squire Staunton. But in the warmth of her newly-revived love, Miss Sharpe began to think that she might manage to teach a few children; so summoning up all her courage, she one day stopped the rector in the road, and told him of her plan. No objection was made; and the next Sunday five little children formed the nucleus of a school, whose numbers had increased with each succeeding week, until she was only too thankful to share her labors with one or two willing helpers. Stephen Hepburn himself had begun a night school, where he instructed the lads from the quarry, and a few ploughboys, in the mysteries of reading and writing. The ripples were spreading on all sides in a way which Captain Staunton had little expected on the evening when he first sat down with seven men in the little barn, to

“Tell them the old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love.”

IV.

"Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

"Then will I praise my Lord and Saviour,
That angels shall
Admire man's fall,
When they shall see God's greatest glory grow,
Where Satan thought to root out all."

SO week after week of the summer passed away, and yet Christie seemed no nearer the goal than she had been on that first evening when the word of God came to her in power. Sometimes she tried to dismiss all serious thoughts; but it was not for long that she succeeded. To herself, and perhaps also to those around her, she seemed to be standing still; but in the spiritual, as in the natural world, "summer and winter, day and night," have not ceased, and each fulfils in its measure the perfection of the whole. Day by day, with "long patience,"

throughout her soul's winter, the great Husbandman was working in her heart, guarding the seed which seemed to have fallen there only to die, that it might yet be to His own glory and honor for all eternity. Truly she might have adopted for herself the words of one who, in describing the way in which the Lord had led him to Himself, said, "I resisted as hard as I could, and God did all the rest." It was with something like a feeling of satisfaction, that she found herself becoming less sensitive to appeals of the Word which she had resisted; and she consoled herself with the thought, that since she had failed to enter into the joy and peace of believing, she might yet be able to find the old pleasure in a return to her former careless ways. Had she known it, this was perhaps the most solemn period of her life. Day after day, she was hardening herself against the love or "the terror of the Lord," and nothing, surely, but the infinite patience of the God she slighted could have returned again and again to plead with her. She attended church and the little reading with far less difficulty than a few weeks ago;

for all she heard was fast becoming to her only as "a very lovely song." She "heard the words of God, but did them not."

Not seldom she tried to persuade Tom to accompany them; but in vain. Sundays or week-days were the same; and the oftener the subject was brought before him, the greater did his dislike and opposition to it become.

Things had gone on in this way for some time, when one morning, when she was in the kitchen preparing dinner for the hungry men and boys, who usually returned to the house about noon, Christie heard a hasty step in the court-yard, and in another moment the door opened, and Tom stood before her. There was that in his appearance and manner which thrilled her with a sense of dread, and her fear increased, when she saw that he was evidently unable to speak.

"What is it, Tom?" she cried eagerly. "What's the matter? Speak, can't you?"

Tom essayed a reply, but the words died on his blanched lips. Through the open window, Christie saw her mother crossing the court.

"Now, Tom, there's a good fellow, tell me what it is. Here's mother coming, and she'd be frightened to death to see you like this. Is anything wrong with father?"

"No, no; he's all right. It's myself."

In a sort of desperation, Christie opened the other door and pushed him out, bidding him go along to her father's room. Then she called Debby from the larder, and begged her to finish the dinner, "and keep mother from asking about me. Something's wrong with Tom; but don't let her be frightened."

Christie's heart beat fast, as she flew down the long passage and opened the door of a room at the further end, where her father was accustomed to pay wages and transact other matters of business. She knew she was safe from interruption there; and with every spark of coquetry driven out by the sight of her cousin's evident distress, she determined not to let him go till she had discovered its cause, and done her best to remove it. When she went in, Tom was sitting at the table, his head bent against a pile of account-books. He took no notice of her at

first, but at length he lifted up his face, and with a look which went through her, said, "O Christie, I am a lost man !

"I know it," he went on deliberately, heeding her words about as much as he would have regarded the murmuring of a gnat. "I have sinned away all hope, and hardened myself against everything ; and now that I see what a sinner I am, it's too late ; and I am lost !"

Christie shrank. The man was as evidently speaking to her as to his own soul. Beneath the power, whatever it might be, which had grasped him, all his natural reserve had vanished ; and he spoke as though he were unconscious of everything but the feeling which absorbed him.

"But, Tom, Tom ! do tell me what's made you think so? You were all right this morning."

"What a time ago that seems," he said, musingly. "I've lived a life since I came up from that quarry. Christie, did you ever hear tell of a drowning man seeing everything he'd ever done in one minute? I've seen myself like that ; and I see it now."

There was a pause, during which his breath came in labored gasps.

"I'll tell you, Christie—if I can. You heard your father tell me this morning as there was another load of stone wanting for the wall yet, and I was to go and fetch it. So I went down, and took little Phil Smith along with me. Well, Hepburn was there, and we'd a'most done loading, when them fellows Riley and Matthews did something—I don't know what, for my back was turned—which aggravated him terribly; and all in a minute, before ever he or we knowed what he was at, he ripped out an oath, as loud as you could hear half across the common."

"Oh!" said Christie, with a long breath.

"I turns round then sharp enough, and I see him standing like a stone, and staring at us. We was all quite still, and then he cries out, as if he was shot, 'Oh, what *have* I done?' and the next minute I see him go as white as a sheet; and, Christie, he fell down in a dead faint—that great, strong fellow—as if he'd been a woman."*

* A true incident.

Tom's voice quailed. Perhaps Stephen Hepburn was the only man on earth whom he truly revered. When he could speak again, he went on: "When he come to, he just went straight away home, and I left Phil to bring up the cart, and came home too, for I saw it all then, Christie; and, thinks I, 'if Hepburn, who was always a good, steady-going fellow, wanted to be converted, what about me? And if, even after he's converted, it's that awful to him to blaspheme his Maker that he looks a'most dead of it, what'll become of me, who swears every time I opens my mouth, if I've a mind to it, and never asked for no forgiveness nor nothing.' "

It was a question which Christie was powerless to answer. She knew nothing of the power of that precious blood of sprinkling which purges from an evil conscience; and the very sight of her cousin's distress brought back in all its power her own sense of sin. She could only try to soothe him, and was more than half glad when her mother called her, and she could slip away to tell her the outline of the strange, sad story. Mrs. Elwood was very much touched. "Poor

lad, poor lad!" she said; "I only wish sin was as dreadful to me. But oh, child, the Lord's ways are wonderful! To think that Hepburn's fall should be the very thing to show our Tom what all the talking in the world could never do. I'd sometimes begun to think he never would feel at all; and it's just made my very blood run cold sometimes to hear him swear. Eh! the Lord is good; bless His name!"

Christie could see no cause for thankfulness, though she did not say so. A cloud seemed to have fallen upon the whole house. Tom excused himself from appearing at dinner, saying he had a headache; but in the afternoon he recovered himself sufficiently to go out to his work. That evening there was no pipe; but he sat indoors, moody and abstracted. His uncle—the result probably of wiser counsels than those of his own brain—had discretion enough to ask no questions; and it was not till Tom had gone to bed that Christie ventured to allude to the subject. She had lingered for the purpose of asking her mother to talk to Tom; she couldn't bear to see him like that.

"I was a wandering sheep,
I did not love the fold,
I did not love my Shepherd's voice,
I would not be controlled!"

These were the words they sung; and not less melodious in the ear of God must have been the song which went up from his repentant heart, too full at first for spoken words, though, with trembling lips, he joined in the closing lines:

"But now I love my Father's voice,
I love, I love His home!"

After the prayer, Captain Staunton sat still for some moments. Then he said, "I had thought of speaking to you to-night out of one of the Psalms; but I have been asked to take the third commandment, and I cannot refuse. Ask God to help me to speak only His truth, and to give me words, for Jesus' sake."

Christie was half-disappointed. She did not think that very much could be made out of one of the commandments, which she had known all her life; but when she looked at Tom, she saw his gaze rivetted on the speaker; and she was

glad that he should be interested enough to listen.

Somewhat on this wise was what she heard :

“Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.”

Captain Staunton began by speaking of the giving of that law of which this commandment formed a part. He bid them turn back to the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, and read how bounds were set around the mountain upon which the Lord descended, lest any man or beast should touch it and die. He told how the mount was “altogether on a smoke,” and “quaked greatly,” because the God of the whole earth was there ; and how, when the trembling people had been brought forth out of the camp to meet with God, and had heard the thundings and the voice of the trumpet, they entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more ; and how even the meekest man who had spoken with God face to face, “as a man speaketh with his friend,” had said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” “We forget,” said Captain

Staunton, "that this awful God is still the same, 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.' Because He does not now show Himself to us as to those Israelites, we are too apt to forget that He is the 'Great King over all the earth.' God does not come to us now 'in power and wrath,' and so we think it but a little thing to sin against Him. As it says in Ecclesiastes, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' But, remember, God cannot change. He is the same God this evening that he was when He came down on Sinai. And did you never think how strange it is that we think nothing, absolutely nothing sometimes, of breaking those commandments, which, in His sight, are so great that He came down from heaven, and spoke them with His own voice, and wrote them with His own hand?"

Then he went on to speak of the eternity of God's truth; and, therefore, of these ten commandments. "There are some," he said, "who would try to persuade us, that we who have

been saved by the mercy of God do not need to keep His commandments. It is a terrible delusion. I want to warn you all against it now I have the opportunity, for I may not be here much longer, and it may be brought before you. I can only say to you, as St. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, 'I commend you to God, *and to the word of His grace.*' Oh, dear friends, search that Word in every difficulty, and never accept what any man teaches you unless he can point to that as his authority. As I said, some will tell you that these ten commandments were only binding on the Jews; and that when the Christian Church arose they were taken away and abolished, and, therefore, are not binding on us Gentiles. Now, I hardly think any one who reads the Bible without prejudice can honestly believe that; for, to show you only one passage, you will see that in the sixth chapter to the Ephesians, St. Paul, writing to the Gentiles, distinctly quotes the fifth commandment as binding upon them. So again, in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments are quoted;

and again in St. James' Epistle. There might be many other ways of showing that the ten commandments belong to us in a certain sense; but I think this is enough for the present. But I want to try and show you in what way the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ have changed our relation towards the law."

In very simple and homely words, Captain Staunton pointed out the difference between keeping the commandments as a means of justification and observing them as a rule of life. The little audience listened with earnest attention, as he referred them to one passage after another to prove this point; and to more than one it was a fresh and blessed increase of light and assurance, as they saw how, through the death of Jesus, the condemnation of the law had passed away from all who are in Him; whilst, by His life of sinless obedience, was provided a robe of righteousness in which they might appear faultless before God. "But do you think," said the captain, "that when we are thus justified and forgiven, we have done with the law? Never! When the Queen sends a

pardon to a poor fellow who is lying in the condemned cell at Newgate, and he walks out a free man, is he excused from keeping the laws for the future? Surely not. The law does not condemn him any more; but it rules him. And just so, we who have accepted God's free, full forgiveness are bound to obey His laws. It's true, that if we really believe His great love towards us, we shall keep them for love's sake. It ought to be misery to us to offend against such a Father; but still, whether we keep them from love or from fear, they are still to be kept, not that we may gain heaven, but just because they are for his honor and our happiness.—'In keeping of His commandments there is great reward.'

"Well, now, I want to try and say something to you about this third commandment: 'Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.' Of course, there is one way of breaking this commandment which lies on the very surface. I mean by swearing. Now I know that, among us soldiers, nothing is more common than this. There are many men who scarcely

open their lips without an oath; and I daresay it is pretty much the same among you working men. I daresay there is not a man in this room who has not, again and again, taken God's name in vain. Now, perhaps, there are some of you who don't like to hear that they are 'guilty before God,' and must receive salvation just in the same way as the very worst of sinners. You feel that in many ways you are much better than they. Well, granting that it is so, God says that though a man may keep the whole law, yet if he offends in one point, he is 'guilty of all.' To some people this seems very hard measure. But think how the same rule holds good in earthly things. If a man has killed another, it may be very true for him to say, 'I never stole a farthing; I never bore false witness;' but that is not the question. The question is, Has he broken the law at any point? If he has, his other good qualities cannot save him; he must suffer the punishment. Now, many hundred years ago, in a land far away from this, there was a ruler whose laws were so stern, that for every offence, great or small, he had but one

punishment—death! It is so with God's law; it has but one penalty—death! He makes no mention of great or little sins. The rule of His kingdom is, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' He does not say, 'The soul that sinneth in this or that particular way,' but simply, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. You see for the smallest sin, as we speak, the punishment is death, eternal death. What greater punishment remains for what we call great sins?

"Now, if the most sober, well-conducted man in this room has ever uttered one oath, he has broken one of God's commandments, and is brought in 'guilty before God,' under the sentence, 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Look to yourselves. I cannot judge you—God forbid that I should—but I want to help you to judge yourselves. Remember that the awful God of whom we have been thinking, is here to-night in this room; and His eyes, which are as a flame of fire, are looking through and through every one of us. Each one of us stands out before Him now just as singly as we shall stand in the day when He shall judge the living and the

dead at His appearing. You do not hope to hide yourself from Him then ; neither can you now. Put aside every other sin, and take only this one, and see whether even once you have taken his name in vain by swearing. Unless I mistake, you can remember time after time when you have done it. I don't ask you to tell me, but you know it ; and God knows it. Each oath that you remember is also remembered by Him, and scores, aye hundreds, which you have forgotten, but which He noted as they dropped from your lips, are all remembered, too. And God says He 'will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.'"

The words were spoken very low, but the stillness in the barn was too deep for one to be lost ; and there was not a sound as he went on.

"There are some of you whom this test will not touch, but it comes closer home to each one of us than this. Think of the words, 'Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.' There is not one of us, women, and children, as well as men, who has not spoken that holy name thousands of times in our

prayers or in reading, without one serious thought ; and perhaps there are none who, in this sense, have broken this commandment so often as the most religious among us. Think of how, Sunday after Sunday, the name of God has been upon your lips, whilst your heart was far away after other things. You were satisfied, so long as you went through the service, and thought it a little thing, that while you professed to be honoring God, you were offending Him every moment. You thought, perhaps, that you were gaining heaven by your services ; but all the time, if your heart did not go with the words you spoke, you were only treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath—sinning as you prayed—sinning as you sang. Do you think God took no notice ? ‘He will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.’”

Here Captain Staunton stopped, and Christie lifted up her head and glanced at him. There was a look of great pity upon his face, and his voice was very gentle as he went on.

“There are some of you to whose hearts I want to try and bring this subject very close,

and yet I almost shrink from it; you will think me so hard. You are miserable enough already: you believe that you are thoroughly convinced of sin; you have groaned, perhaps, for a long time under the burden of it; and you want to be comforted. And yet, perhaps, there are none in this room who are taking God's name in vain in a more insulting way than you. Don't think I want to terrify you or to scold you into despair; I only want, by God's help, to show you what you are really doing. Listen to me! You know that you are lost. You have heard again and again of God's love to you in Christ. You have asked Him again and again to forgive you for His sake, and yet you say that you are still unanswered, unforgiven, unsaved. I know there are some such here to-night—are there not? Who in all this world has so taken God's name in vain as you? You have spoken to Him again and again. Surely it was for some purpose. Was it not that you might get forgiveness? But if you have not got it, you have, as yet, utterly failed of your purpose; you have taken God's name upon your lips '*in vain.*' And

oh! as I said just now, none have so insulted Him as you. Others have broken His law, but you have trampled upon His love. God commanded that they should not offend against His holy name; He only came to them, as it were, with law, and truly, He will not hold them guiltless for breaking it. But to you He came with the new law which He gave, not from Sinai, but from Calvary—‘Believe and live. Come and take,’—and it has been in vain. Will He hold you guiltless? To them He only came with thunderings and lightnings, and with the voice of a trumpet; but to you He came with the dying groans of His own Son, and besought you by all that infinite agony—that untold love—to be reconciled to Him, swearing even by Himself that He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that, coming to Him, you should in no wise be cast out. And you say that you went to Him and asked Him for the pardon which He had died to buy for you, and asked ‘in vain:’ that you spoke that Name which is above every name, and pleaded it with Him ‘in vain.’ Can you say before the all-seeing God that it is His

fault that you are unforgiven? If not, whose is it? Must it not be that you, in the most solemn and awful sense possible, have taken His name in vain?"

Every word seemed to go through Christie's heart. Lately she had steeled herself with the thought that she had asked to be forgiven, and if she had not got peace, the responsibility rested not with herself, but with God. But the strong words, spoken unflinchingly, and yet so tenderly, pierced through the last folds of her armor, and left her bleeding and helpless. It seemed as if, for the moment, a perfect whirlwind of despair had taken possession of her; she put her head down upon the back of the bench before her, and then, while not even a tremor betrayed to others what was passing within her, the hosts of God and the armies of hell seemed to wrestle fiercely for her soul. It was some time before anything around her had power to break through the intense strain in which every faculty seemed to be absorbed. When she began to listen once more, Captain

Staunton was speaking in other and far different words.

“He did not hold Him guiltless,” he was saying—“not even His own Beloved Son, when our sins were laid upon Him. Oh, did you never think *how* He has loved you—this God against whom you have sinned your whole life long? Did you never think that, while you were yet an enemy, He loved you with such a boundless love that He let all His justice spend itself upon Jesus, that you, a poor, lost, guilty rebel, might go free? He did it: ‘while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us, ‘gave Himself for us.’ Surely your hearts are won now! And any one of you, whoever it may be, may come this very hour and ‘take of the water of life freely.’ It is the only return He asks you to make for His unspeakable love—just that you would give Him and ‘let Him keep the soul He died to win.’ Is there no one here who, to-night, will let the Lord Jesus have the joy of saying about him

“‘Twas not in vain I died for thee”?

Under his breath, in tones so low that none but Christie, who was sitting beside him, could hear, Tom Elwood answered, "I will." Half-frightened, Christie glanced round at him. He was sitting, as he had sat when she looked at him more than half-an-hour ago, his elbows upon the back of the bench in front, his chin resting upon his hands, and his eyes fixed upon the speaker. But now those eyes were full of tears, which were running over and dropping down unheeded upon his jacket, and the rough, uncultured face was lit up "as the face of an angel." It was one of those rare moments, coming but once perhaps in a life-time, when a man's very soul seems to break from its trammels, and clothe even the unloveliest face with a strange beauty. Those to whom God has granted the joy of witnessing the passage "from death unto life," have sometimes seen that look as the soul has leapt forth to see, for the first time, the face of God reconciled in Christ Jesus; and forgetful of self, and sin, and surroundings, the man has been transfigured for a moment in the light of that excellent glory—a type, it may be, of that

last new creation, when soul and body together shall be perfected into His image, as we "see Him as He is." Christie turned sharply away again, with a feeling of shame, as though she had broken in upon a private interview; and, in truth, it was nothing less. The Good Shepherd and the wandering sheep had met; the son, once dead but alive again, was resting in the Father's embrace, and meeting His look of love. When she ventured to glance again, as they rose from their knees, the sudden flash of brightness was gone, but there was a look of entire content, such as Tom's face had never before known. As they passed out, his hand and Stephen Hepburn's met in a long clasp, and they walked home together. From that night they were friends, bound to each other by a tie of special tenderness.

with befitting gravity, by way of improving the occasion.

"But do they really think he'll die, Mrs. Prentice?"

"I shouldn't say there's much hope for a man of his years. Why, he's never spoke a mortal word; and all he could do was to write on a bit of paper that they was to send for Captain Staunton."

"Has he come?"

"Yes, child; he's been there this three hours. And they've sent for all the relations he has; but that's not many, poor old gentleman."

Just then another customer came in, and Christie was glad to finish her shopping as soon as might be, and escape from the stream of gossip and common-place moralizing with which Mrs. Prentice seasoned her description of how Mr. Dale, the butler, had gone into the study and found his master lying back in his easy-chair, speechless, and how it had given Mrs. Pratt, the housekeeper, such a turn, that she didn't know when she would get over it. With quick steps she turned homewards, thinking of

how she could remember the rector as long as anything; and how strange it was that he, so familiar to them all, should perhaps be standing on the very brink of an unknown, mysterious world, from which there was no reprieve, no drawing back. What would it be, if she were suddenly called away from her busy toil for evermore? If death came and took her from the midst of her home-work and daily life, would she be ready? She could not answer the question.

The rector had lived too much apart from his people to gain their hearts; but there were few in the church next morning who did not, in the presence of the approaching severance of that long tie, feel a regretful sorrow for the kind-hearted, courtly old gentleman, when a stranger took his place in the desk, and, after the collect for the day, asked their prayers for the "rector of this parish, who is dangerously ill." The report of the London doctor was not encouraging: the old gentleman might rally, if he had not another attack; but there was evidently but scanty ground for hope. The next day, just as

the men were coming home to their dinners, and the busy housewives were laying the cloth or taking the pot from the fire, the slow stroke of the bell called them to the door-ways to listen. The old rector had passed away quietly and calmly ; to the last conscious moment, listening with deepest interest to the prayers and verses which were repeated beside his bed. Early in the morning, when the first rays of light were struggling into the room, he had signed for a Bible, and showed that he wished to point to some special passage. His godson slowly turned over page after page before the dim eyes, and at the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, the old man arrested him and placed his finger upon the thirteenth verse : "God be merciful to me a sinner." Without speaking, Captain Staunton laid his own upon the verse below : "I tell you that this man went down to his house *justified*." The dying man paused, as if hesitating to accept so bold a conclusion ; then at last, with an effort, the trembling hand sought down the page till it rested on the word "Jesus." It was his dying testimony. And

“what soul ever perished with his face towards Jesus Christ?”

There was much talk in the village as to his probable successor. Two nephews and other more distant relatives came to the funeral, and attended to the disposition of his property; and for some weeks the pulpit was filled by strangers. The living was in the gift of Squire Staunton; and though Mrs. Elwood said but little, she built much upon the hope that the patron might be influenced in his choice by his son. During the interval, the rectory was put into thoroughly repair; and report said that a gray-haired clergyman had been seen there in company with the squire, and again with some of the young ladies. At last, just as harvesting was over, the appointment was formally announced, together with the probability that the new rector would preach the following Sunday, and might come into the rectory before the week was out. Those were golden days for Mrs. Prentice; every van of furniture must needs pass her door, and her importance and excitement were unbounded. Whence she obtained her information was un-

known, but it generally proved to be correct. Mr. Severn was an elderly man, and his wife some years younger than himself. They were in deep mourning; Mrs. Prentice believed, for the eldest son. There was another son in the navy, and two little girls about twelve or thirteen years old—Mrs. Prentice would think, “nice little ladies, and just as fond of their papa as could be. I seen them this morning going down the lane, one in either hand, and him looking as pleased as they.”

No wonder that Mr. Severn rejoiced in the bright country lanes. He had come from a parish in a northern manufacturing town, where he had given the best years of his life to his God and his fellow-men. He was losing his vigor now; and only a few months before the offer of the living of Corfield had come from his old college friend, he had been almost crushed by the death of his son, who had just taken orders, preached his first sermon, and then gone to minister “in the house of the Lord forever.” It was a pleasant exchange to Mr. Severn from the crowded streets, and narrow courts and alleys,

into the wide fresh country ; and sore as was the wrench, he felt that he was doing right in leaving his beloved parish in younger and stronger hands, and coming to work more suited to his lessened powers.

In the mean time, things were going on quietly at the High Farm. Perhaps the greatest change was in Tom. Though he still retained his silent and undemonstrative manner, the surliness had entirely vanished ; and through all the hot weeks of the harvesting, not once had the can of beer touched his lips. He met with plenty of raillery ; and even his gentle aunt was disposed to be vexed with him.

“It’s terrible hot work harvesting, Tom,” she would say. “Thee needs something to keep up thy strength. Why shouldn’t you take it as father does ? Why, he never was the worse for it in his life.”

“But I was,” said Tom, stoutly, “over and over again. I’m best without it. I don’t know as I’d stop if once I began ; and I might go and bring disgrace on my profession ; and I couldn’t stand that. Some of these days, I shall go and

put my name down along of Hepburn. Why, there's nigh a score of them lads of his has put their names down never to touch a drop again; and you never see a likelier lot of young fellows."

The pipe soon followed the mug of beer; and then Tom began to conquer his shyness, and go to Hepburn's class when he could get away from the harvest-field in time. Or Stephen would come up to the farm when his work was over, and the two would sit in the porch toiling laboriously through a spelling-book; or Tom would plant himself and his copy-book at the table, with the decision of a general sitting down before a beleaguered city, and give himself up to pot-hooks and hangers; whilst Stephen's rich, full voice and good reading gave fresh power to the quaint beauty of the glorious old "Pilgrim's Progress," till Debby and one or two of the farm-boys would draw up to the door, which opened into the back kitchen, and Tom would forget his writing, and sit open-mouthed and entranced to hear of that heavenly course upon which his own feet were entering. Christie, too,

loved those readings, diversified as they were by Hepburn's explanations. She cried bitterly, though quietly, when they came to the place where burdened Christian ran up the shining way to the Cross, and began to sing with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." "Christian"—it was her own name; and yet she felt she had no right to it, for she knew nothing experimentally of Christ. She knew now, as she did not half-a-year ago, the plan of salvation; she could have directed others to the Saviour; but her own eye had not seen Him. Sometimes she felt as if nothing were more like her heart than the hard earth about her. It had been an unusually dry summer, and the thirsty ground had opened into wide cracks and furrows, gasping after the fresh showers, which could be its only healing. She, too, thirsted with an untold longing for God, for the living God; she stretched forth her hands unto Him. One of her greatest comforts now was the recollection of the words which Mrs. Hopper had repeated to the old rector so many weeks ago, "The way

of His commandments is the best place in which to wait for Him." She began to "order her steps by His Word;" not from any hope of meriting forgiveness—she was too well instructed for that—but simply because she could not do otherwise.

Things were in this state, when they went down one autumn morning to hear their new minister for the first time. Christie felt as if she could love him, directly he began to read in a clear voice which could be heard in every corner of the old church; and when he got into the pulpit, it really seemed to be like a friend talking to her. Surely it was something better than curiosity which drove sleep away from the pews that Sunday morning, whilst the new rector spoke from the text which he had chosen—"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—words which seemed to come fresh from his heart to his hearers, as living, loving, responsible men and women, placed in a redeemed world, that they might learn how best to fulfil "the chief

end of man's life—to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

The party from the High Farm had always returned home after the morning service, leaving that in the afternoon with but scant regret; but such words were too precious to be slighted. Mrs. Elwood stood hesitatingly in the porch, wondering how it might be possible to hear the rector preach again, when Mrs. Hopper came by, her unfailing smile even broader and fuller than ever, and begged them all to come home with her to dinner, and stay for the afternoon service. “You’ll get home by milking after all, if you look sharp. The rector doesn’t preach long; and Christie can make haste and be back before the cows want her. Come in now; do.”

Neither Mrs. Elwood nor her husband needed much persuasion; and to her dying day Christie thanked God for the invitation which kept her to that afternoon service in Corfield Church. As Mrs. Hopper had foretold, the rector preached only a short sermon, shorter than in the morning. He spoke of Christ Jesus as “the Friend of sinners,” telling each and all how they needed

His friendship, and how ready He was to bestow it. He spoke of that seal and sign of His love which He had given in dying for us, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" and insensibly Christie's thoughts were drawn away from herself, till she forgot her sin and unbelief and hardness of heart, in the thought of His matchless love. It was the custom in Corfield Church to close the afternoon service with a hymn; and when Mr. Severn had ended his sermon, he read out the first verse:

"My blessed Saviour, is Thy love
So great, so rich, so free?
Behold, I give my love, my life,
My heart, my all to Thee."

They stood up to sing it; and as Christie rose to her feet she knew that the showers of God were dropping fast upon her thirsty soul. He who was promised to be "as the dew unto Israel," had come in "to abide with her forever." He had taken that one simple verse, and used it to show her Jesus. In a moment, she could not tell how, the "love unknown had broken every barrier down." All she knew was

that the mighty work was done. Constrained by His love, she had given "her love, her life, her heart, her all to Him." As she stood quietly beside her mother, listening to the unmusical instrument in the singing gallery, and the aged quavering notes on the one side, and Tom's gruff base on the other, she wondered to think that so simply and so gently the great work was done, which had seemed to her an impossibility. There were the old familiar walls and high pews, the very marks in the faded green baize which she had known from her childhood; and there, among these accustomed things, even in the very path of her ordinary life, the eternal God had revealed Himself to her waiting soul. The rest of the hymn was lost upon her. Over and over again she dwelt upon the precious words—not so much with rapture as with a deep content :

"My blessed Saviour, is Thy love
So great, so full, so free?"

She wanted nothing else. The soul which had thirsted after God was satisfied with His goodness. She was glad that the demands of the

milking made it only natural that she should walk on quickly, for she needed no company. All through the warm light of the golden autumn afternoon, she hurried home, wrapped about, as it seemed to her, with an atmosphere of peace and love. She had no wish to turn aside from her daily duties. Phil Smith had already driven in the cows, and she soon pulled off her Sunday dress, and sat down in the milking shed ; but as she filled pail after pail, one song rang on in her heart :

“ My blessed Saviour, is Thy love
So great, so full, so free ?
Behold, I give my love, my life,
My heart, my all to Thee.”

VI.

"This is the famous stone
Which turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."

GEORGE HERBERT.

"MOTHER, there's a carriage coming up the hill."

Christie was standing out in front of the porch, picking the late roses from the walls. The hill on which the High Farm was built formed the garden—just one of the old-fashioned gardens, which are not too often seen now-a-days, where the roses, and clematis, and honeysuckle crept round the gnarled apple trees, and almost smothered the possibility of any fruit under their wealth of blossom. Excepting the sort of gravelled terrace which ran along the front of the house, and one or two lesser walks, almost

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all the paths were turf; and among the gooseberry and currant bushes were brilliant beds of flowers. The garden was the pride of them all, and, as it lay sloping towards the south, was a warm and sheltered spot even in winter days. There was no entrance to the house on that side, excepting for foot-passengers. The road passed up one side of the garden, and then turned sharp round at the back into the large flagged yard, where the dwelling-house and offices formed two sides and half of a square, the remaining half opening out into what was more properly the farmyard, whither the straw and litter were banished. It was thus that Christie was able to hear and see the carriage some minutes before it drove into the yard, and stopped at the other door. When she went out she recognized, in the fair-haired girl, who was holding the reins, one of the rector's little daughters. Beside her was an elderly woman, whose kindly face had been familiar enough at the farm for many years, for she was a distant cousin of Elwood's, and not unfrequently, in the days when another generation lived and ruled there, she had spent

weeks together in the quiet country, away from the noisy manufacturing town where her father worked, and where Mr. Stevens had lived. She was now housekeeper at Mallenden Court, a post which she had filled for many years; and now and then she would manage the journey to Corfield, and sit for an afternoon talking over "auld lang syne" beside the kitchen fire.

"Are you Christie?" cried the child, pushing back her hat with her whip, and then shading her eyes with her little brown hand. "Because I've brought Prissy to see you. She came to spend the day with us, and I'm going on to old Jacob's with some pudding, and then I'll fetch her again."

"How do you do, my dear?" said Mrs. Chase, as Christie helped her out of the low carriage. "Yes, miss, Tottie'll come back for me. Now mind, you take care, my dear, and let Dennis take the reins when you go down the steep lane, if you're at all afraid."

"Not I," answered little Miss Tottie, as she drove off, looking back, as she turned the corner, with a merry wave of her whip.

"Bless the child!" ejaculated Mrs. Chase. "They don't, none of them, know what fear is."

"What a pretty little thing!" said Christie, musingly. "I wish the rector would come to see us."

By this time they were in the kitchen.

"I'll call father," said Christie, and slipped away.

The two old women kissed each other — a tender, subdued greeting. Neither spoke for a minute, whilst they looked into each other's eyes, and read there for the first time how truly they were one.

"The Lord's been very good to us," said Mrs. Elwood, wiping away one or two of the gentle tears which would always come so readily.

Mrs. Chase was of a brisker mood, a stout, comely woman, whose very presence carried with it a sense of keys and household management, though she was now losing somewhat the activity of middle age.

"My dear," she said, sitting down before the fire, and laying a broad palm upon either knee as she leaned back in her chair — "my dear, I

couldn't have believed it. I always had a great respect for religion, and knew it became a minister and some few, like my poor dear young dead mistress, but as for me, with all them china closets and linen closets, and all them girls to see after, to say nothing of preserving and deserts, I felt it was no manner of use my thinking about it, not as I was. But I see things in a different light now, bless the Lord!"

Here she was interrupted by Christie and her father, who had been making up his accounts in the other room. When the warm greetings were over, and Christie had spread the table for tea, they gathered round, and after awhile the talk fell again into the strain which was now frequent enough at the High Farm.

"You were saying you wished the rector would come up here, Christie. It was just about that he bid me bring a message, and say he was right sorry he'd not been able to see you yet at home; but you see it's a good way, and he's been so crippled with rheumatism, almost ever since they got here, and it was only on Wednesday the pony-carriage came. He was a-going

to drive me over his own self this very afternoon ; but there was a poor man took for death down in the village, and he was forced to stay for him."

"Who was it?" asked Elwood.

"I didn't hear the name, but I'm of opinion it's only a man on tramp through the place, lodging at Mrs. Phillips'. But the rector's as careful about his soul, as if it were the first nobleman in the land. He was up with him the best part of the night, but the doctor thought he'd get over it, till about dinner-time to-day."

"He's a fine preacher, our parson," said the old man.

"Indeed, and he is," returned Mrs. Chase. "Why, at home I've seen the church sometimes so full of a Sunday night, that there was scarce standing-room, and the most of them working-men, and you could have heard a pin drop. Ah, I know I thought him a mighty fine preacher then, and he was quite a youngish sort of man ; but I'd like to hear him again now. His words would have a new sense to me now."

Christie looked up quickly. Perhaps the most wonderful thought to her, after the great overpowering one of the love of God, was the realization of the brotherhood of the faith, and that she, little homely Christian Elwood, was indeed "a very member incorporate in that mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people"—one with the holy apostles, and martyrs, and prophets; one in spirit with all the shining throng who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and now stand before the face of God. Her heart gave a great leap towards the kind old friend of her childhood, as she seemed to see in her another of that blessed company.

The motion was not lost.

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Chase, "as I was saying to your mother awhile ago, I've learned strange things lately. I always knew religion was a good and decent thing to die with; but as to its being a thing to live with, and such a life as mine too, no, I never believed that."

"What made you believe it?" asked Christie, thoroughly interested.

"Well, my dear, it was slow work. To begin with—you'll smile maybe—but I believe it was the death of my poor Tabby first brought home to me the vanity of all earthly things. That was a year ago last Christmas; and the poor thing! I'd had her so long she was like a friend to me. I think, after my poor mother was gone, I loved that cat as well as I loved anything; and when I saw it lying there cold and stiff, it brought solemn thoughts to my mind. I'd been just taken up with the company, and china, and one thing and another, till they had altogether shut out the very thought of God from me. I assure you, my dears, He was no more to me than one of the bits of china in my cupboard, though I went to church sometimes of a Sunday, just for custom's sake. But when I lost my poor Tabby, I couldn't help thinking a deal. I'd seen many people die, but there! I could always manage to keep the thought of them from inconveniencing me, by the idea that I'd not seen the last of them; but after pussy was taken, I'd reflect sometimes that the poor thing was gone forever and ever; and somehow

that made me *feel* I had got a soul, and how I had been neglecting it, and living for all the world as though I was no better than she. Them thoughts would come to me all sorts of times—sometimes I'd be stirring a jelly over my fire, and find myself stepping careful to avoid treading on Tabby, where she always lay just against the fender; and then I'd look down, and she wasn't there. Then I'd put the question to myself in this way, 'Where is she? Nowhere. But where shall I have to be? Somewhere!' And that word 'somewhere,' would keep staring me in the face. I don't mean I was always like this, but at all odd times them queer feelings would take hold of me, and I never knew when I was safe from them."

"Well?" said Christie—for Mrs. Chase had paused, and was meditatively stirring her tea.

"Well, this sort of thing went on for a good bit, till Mr. Harry came home; and I daresay John told you how he began having family prayers. I could never tell the turn it gave me, and it brought back his poor mother so plain to me. I scarce slept that night for think-

ing of her, poor young lady, and how she talked to me, and to his papa and all, just when she were going, and had hardly strength to speak. Still, for all that, I wasn't altogether prepared for Mr. Harry's religious ways. I couldn't bear to see him so different to other gentlemen; and yet when I came to look it all over quietly, there was nothing I could find fault with. He was just the same merry heart he always was—in and out of my room with the young ladies, making coffee, and turning my cupboards upside down; and, with all that, it was like a new man. Sometimes he'd come and sit with me alone, and, if ever there was a chance, out would come that little Bible of his."

"Ah, I know it," interrupted Mrs. Elwood.

"I didn't give him much encouragement with that, mind you," resumed the old housekeeper. "I'd no concern to be turned religious; but I just made up my mind to watch; and then I found that what he'd got was a sort of thing that made him fitter to do everything than he ever was before. I'd see him so patient for hours with the young ladies, teaching Miss

Charlotte to draw, or singing with Miss Isabel, or reading to them, just because I firmly believe he couldn't bear to have them wasting their lives as they did, a burden to themselves and every one else. And I knew all the time he'd have been glad enough to get away and read his own books, or that little Bible. Then sometimes he'd be the best part of the morning with the mistress, drawing patterns for her embroidery ; and never, so Ellis tells me, so much as one impatient word, for all her little whims. So at last I began to believe, that if his religion not only took him about visiting the poor folk and having them little meetings, but helped him to have to do with singing and embroidery, maybe it mightn't be amiss with my preserves and jellies ; and I told him so one day, and, if you'll believe me, the tears came into his eyes, and out of them too. He didn't say very much, but enough to set me thinking that, perhaps, after all, I was a wicked old sinner, who'd set my heart on idols all my life long, and such idols too. But, thank God, I see things different now, and I know I'm forgiven for it all. Eh !

but it's a hard struggle sometimes with the old ways."

Those last words touched a tender chord in Christie's heart, which quivered on long after the kindly old woman had taken her leave, and had been driven away by the fair-haired child. She was beginning to enter into the realities of Christian life, and like many another to cry—"Why is it thus with me?" Her refined and sensitive nature was easily affected, and the path towards which she was now drawn by an unseen yet irresistible hand, seemed to her to lead through "a land that no man had passed through, and where no man dwelt." The undisturbed brightness and calm of the days of her first love seemed to be slipping away from her grasp, and yet she was not conscious of any wilful indulgence of what was contrary to the will of God. She was sorely perplexed, and felt herself alone in the spiritual world. Her mother's placid, even nature, subdued by the quietness of age, was ruffled by no such storms; she rested with an uninquiring, childlike faith in her Saviour's love. Tom was of far too stolid a

nature to be capable of much introspection, and too silent to give utterance even to such thoughts or experiences as he may have possessed; and Stephen Hepburn was now but rarely at the farm. Nor did she gain much from Jack. He rode over one morning, and during a few minutes when they were alone together, Christie ventured tremblingly to hint that she was afraid she wasn't so happy as she had been at first.

"Not happy!" said Jack, in astonishment. "Why, what have you got to be unhappy about? I'm always happy."

"I don't know," murmured Christie, almost ready to cry.

"Well, but, Christie, you ought to know. Are you doing anything you oughtn't to do? I don't see what else can make Christians unhappy. Why, we ought to be always rejoicing. Doesn't it say, 'Rejoice evermore'?"

"I know it does," said poor Christie; "and that's the worst of it all, for there must be something altogether wrong about me, if I can't do as it says. And yet how can I rejoice when I'm not happy? and I can't make myself be happy."

I forget how many now. What should you think I did?"

"Made up the fires," answered Christie, with eyes still fixed on his face.

"What! not warm up the thermometer itself? You know if I had held my finger on the bulb, I could soon have made the mercury rise again."

Christie smiled.

"I think you see my meaning," he continued, as her eyes dropped. "Your feelings are very like a thermometer, one day up and another day down. But they are no more a true *source* of comfort than the thermometer is a source of heat. Looking at that, and warming it up, wouldn't have warmed the room. Neither will looking at your feelings, and trying to force them into happiness, bring joy. Don't you remember what that verse says, 'Joy and peace in—feeling?'"

"No, 'in believing.' But then," said Christie, hesitating, "I think in this way. If I did believe, shouldn't I have joy and peace?"

"I haven't got joy and peace, therefore, *I don't* believe, and therefore I am not saved," supplied

Captain Staunton. "Logic! Well, it's a question which troubles every one of us, more or less, sooner or later. I am glad you have got to it."

"Glad!" It seemed almost cruel.

"Yes, glad. When you were a baby your mother was very well pleased to see you lying still in the cradle; but do you think she would have been content if you had stayed there till to-day, just breathing, but not more? When we are converted, we get life—spiritual life; we breathe. But surely there must be something more than this. If you asked a man's history, you wouldn't be content to be told, 'Oh, he breathed.' Of course he breathed his whole life through; but you want to hear something about his education, and what he did and said and thought. Well, just so, we must have our spiritual history. We are not converted just to be kept out of hell, and no more. Look here!"

Christie took the little well-worn Bible, and read:

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love."

"Yes, that's it. 'Holy and without blame before Him.' Think of what that means. And do you think holiness is learned in a day? Never! It's our life-work. And it's not learned without many a hard lesson, either; and I believe that what God is doing with you now, is just setting you on the lowest form in His school, and giving you the A, B, C, to learn. Don't you want to be His scholar?"

"Yes," said Christie, with starting tears.

"You know this has just nothing whatever to do with our salvation. That is, as it were, out of our hands altogether, when we once yield our souls to the Lord Jesus. He has undertaken all that; and it is no concern of ours, since He has become our Surety. Don't you think," and his voice kindled as he spoke, "that Jesus, 'having loved His own which are in the world,' will love them unto the end?"

"But can I be one of His own, when I am like this?" The tears were dropping fast into her lap now.

"Suppose that you could tell me every one of the bitter things you have been writing against

yourself, and a hundred times worse, what would you have proved yourself to be at the end of it all?"

Christie looked up.

"I mean, would you have proved yourself to be anything else than a sinner?"

"No."

"Then, who was it that Jesus came to save? 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' 'The Friend of sinners.' After all that, you could tell me, you could only prove yourself to be one of those whom He loved and died for, and whose 'Friend' He is content to be called."

"Then it seems as if I might be glad to be a sinner."

"Well, I don't know," said Captain Staunton, sighing; "one can't forget what it cost Him; and then there is the other side of the question, that, in so far as we give way to sin, we are failing of the very object for which He gave us this eternal salvation. But I know sometimes,

when I have been very low down, I have blessed God that nothing could take that name away from me, not even my own sinfulness."

"I think," he continued, after a few moments' silence, "that one of the hardest lessons for us to learn, even after we are converted, is that we are still nothing but poor sinners, nothing in the world else. We want to be great saints; but do you remember how, almost at the end of his glorious life, St Paul said, 'I am the chief of sinners;' not 'I was;' but 'I *am*;' and I should fancy he knew it then more truly than ever before. It seems to me that one's life-long lesson is in the old sailor's lines :

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.'

What a 'But' that is! It has all heaven in it! I am sure it is just this lesson which God is beginning to teach you. He is stripping you of your happy feelings, not because He likes to see you miserable, but because He is going to teach you how to rejoice in something better even than happy feelings, and that is Himself

and His own unchanging Word. When all your feelings are gone, and you find that He loves you still, you will begin to rest in *what He is*, instead of in *what He gives you* ; and, oh, it's such a sure resting-place, that. 'Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end. ' "

The dark cloud was breaking fast.

"Then do you think God took away my happiness and peace?"

"I dare not say that," answered Captain Staunton, gravely. "No one but He can tell you how far you may have trifled with His grace. Don't get to think lightly of even the smallest sin ; it's a tremendous thing to sin, and the least known sin brings a cloud. But, then, there's no need for the cloud to stay. And, for another thing, our natural spirits depend very much upon our health, and the weather, and a thousand things ; and all these may affect our feelings of spiritual happiness as well. One must allow for that. But I'll tell you how I look at it myself. I know there isn't a day in which I don't *deserve* to lose all my happy feelings ; and yet how often God leaves them to me. 'He does not deal

with me after my sins, nor reward me according to my iniquities.' If, then, there are times when, without my being conscious of having given way in any special manner, my happy feelings are yet gone, I conclude that God allows that to fall upon me which I have quite deserved, in order to teach me something. It's not an arbitrary punishment; but, instead of averting what I have quite deserved, He lets it fall upon me for my profit, that I may be partaker of His holiness. He makes my very punishment my cure."

"Thank you," said Christie, as he began to move. "Oh, it's been such a help!"

"And how is the thermometer?" he asked, with a smile.

"Do you mean my feelings? Oh, I feel another creature—such a weight gone."

"Well, don't you see, we didn't study the thermometer to warm it. We went out into the sunshine of God's love and unchangeableness, and purposes towards you, and it rose without your knowing it. If your feelings are cold, just let them be, and go to Jesus."

"Jack said I ought to be always rejoicing."

"And a greater than Jack said it. 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' But, then, remember it is 'in the Lord,' not in your feelings; and when you get to know something for yourself of what we have been talking about, you will have much more chance of obeying the command. So long as you rejoice in frames and feelings, you will be happy just so long as they last, and no longer; but when you learn to trust in Him—Him himself, the real, living, loving, present Jesus—then you'll always have steady peace, come what may."

"I'm afraid it'll be a long time before I can do that."

"Don't be disheartened if it is. Every one begins in the same way, and God does not expect any of His children to read at first sight; nor that it should be 'reading without tears' either. But still remember what St. Paul says: 'I can do all things through Christ.' So don't be content without it. Just go to God, and tell Him all this as simply as you told me,

and ask Him to teach you His lesson. Shall we ask Him now?"

The three, so diverse in everything but their one life in Christ Jesus, knelt down together beside the broad hearth. One sentence of that simple, childlike prayer, Christie thought she would never forget: "Thou hast given us each one our lesson. O Lord Jesus, sit beside us while we learn it."

"I'm afraid I shan't see you again after next week," said Captain Staunton, as he took leave. "My father's health has given way so much that the doctors order him to Torquay at once; and before they are home again, I expect my leave will be up, and I shall be on my way back to India."

"God bless you, sir," said Mrs. Elwood, fervently. "I wish you had a mother to rejoice over you." The words escaped her almost involuntarily. He was greatly moved.

"I think she knows," he said, softly. "'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.'" And then he mounted, and rode quickly away.

It had been a sorrowful day at the High

Farm, when the rector paid his first visit there. The night before they, and many others, had said good-by to the one to whom they owed more than life, with no prospect, so far as the old people were concerned, of ever seeing his face again till they should behold it in the light of heaven. It was late in the afternoon, and already getting dusk, when the pony-carriage came trotting up the hill. Naturally enough, the talk fell to the subject of which all their hearts were full ; and it was with a most sweet pleasure that Mr. Severn found how many who dwelt under that roof were living in full hope of the glory of God.

“ It’s wonderful !” he said. “ Almost wherever I go I hear the same story of blessing through these simple means. I am sure I have felt it is a lesson to myself. By all accounts the place is quite changed.”

“ Indeed it is, sir,” replied Mrs. Elwood. “ I think we was more like heathen than Christians before them meetings.”

“ So Miss Sharpe was telling me. It touches me greatly when I think of how God has

honored that man's simple faith and obedience. Now, so many, even Christian people, would have left the souls of others with the clergy ; or, at all events, if they had been here for so short a time, would have contented themselves by saying there was not time to do any good. It's this spirit of personal service to Christ, which sees in every creature a soul to be won for Him, which we want. I bless God every day for the way in which he has opened the path for me."

"May I make bold to ask, sir," inquired Mrs. Elwood, "whether you are going to keep on the meetings? The captain told us last night he hoped you would."

"I hope so too, please God," answered the rector. "When I first thought of coming here, I quite intended to have a weekly meeting, for I am sure we all want a break in the midst of our toil. However, when I saw how things were, I determined that nothing should induce me to make any change, though Captain Staunton was very anxious to give it into my hands. But now you have lost him, I feel only too thankful to

take it up ; and I pray God that He will bless it in the future as He has in the past."

And so those little Wednesday evening meetings, which were endeared by a thousand sacred recollections, were not lost to Corfield, but became a permanent blessing to the place.

VIII.

“Remember me ! by Thine own hour of pain,
Appear in mine to save ;
Smooth for my rest the couch where Thou hast lain,
The pillow of the grave.”

—*Hymns from the Land of Luther.*

“MY dear child, what’s the matter?” exclaimed Mrs. Elwood, coming into collision with her daughter, as she turned from the lane into the courtyard.

“I beg your pardon. O mother, I hope you’re not hurt. Matty Jones has sent for me ; her sister is awfully hurt—fallen down stairs, and cut her head open.”

“My dear, you’re not fit to go racing like this ; you’re all out of breath. What’s the matter ? Is your side hurting you again ?”

“A little ; not much,” said Christie, leaning back against the wall for support ; for her lips

were white, and the feeling of sudden exhaustion almost overpowered her for a moment. But she roused herself as the thought of the frightened, anxious girl in the distant cottage crossed her mind ; and silencing her mother's alarms with a kiss, she went on more quietly down the hill. Happily the fall did not prove so dangerous as had been feared ; and by the time the father came in from his work, the little girl was restored to consciousness, and was lying in her sister's motherly arms, with a smile once more on the pale face. Christie and the doctor left the house together. His old-fashioned gig was standing at the gate ; but he paused in the narrow path, and turned round upon her with a look of scrutiny.

"What's the matter with you, child?" he asked, sharply.

"Nothing ; I don't know ; I don't feel as well as I used," said Christie, the sentences dropping out reluctantly one after the other, as the doctor's silent, keen gaze showed her that he would not be satisfied with any evasive reply.

He had known her from her babyhood ; and

now took her hand in his, and asked one or two professional questions.

"You have no business to be out here, a raw evening like this," he said, presently. "Wrap yourself well up in your cloak, and I'll drive you home."

"I shall come and see you before very long," he said, as he wished her good-night at the door, after talking on indifferent subjects all the way. "No, thank you, I'll not come in this evening; but now mind you take care of yourself, and attend to the few little things I told you just now."

"Poor child, poor child!" murmured the old man to himself, as he drove carefully down the hill through the dark mists. But as he involuntarily looked up and saw a few feeble stars glimmering overhead, his thoughts mounted up above and beyond them to the place which, in his quiet, old-fashioned way, he had looked upon as his real house ever since the wife of his youth had faded away in his sight. "The less of this cold world, the more of heaven," he muttered, as his sure-footed horse stepped cannily



Christie Elwood.

"I've noticed ever since the spring she wasn't so hearty, but she never would allow she was ill."

"Well now, you just attend to the directions I've given you. She caught cold yesterday, and there was previous delicacy; but now don't dishearten yourself or her. Good morning. I'll come up again to-morrow."

But when he had drawn on his driving gloves, and taken the reins from his man's hand, the professional shake of the head which he had so long restrained escaped him. Fortunately the poor mother had turned in-doors.

Yes, there was no doubt of it. Rapid consumption had laid its hand on Christie; and she was marked for death. Apparently she recovered in a few days from the severe cold which she had caught in her imprudent journey into the damp valley; but the real harm was too surely and deeply rooted to be driven away. In the course of a week or so she was about the house again, but with a languor which surprised herself, and a constant hacking cough, which went to her mother's heart. The girl's brave

spirit had borne her up through what she now confessed to have been a good deal of pain lately; and now that the collapse had come, it was startlingly entire. It tried her terribly. Unused to inaction, she could not bear to sit still while others were busy; and yet any attempt at her ordinary work brought on a breathlessness and pain in the side which compelled her to desist. Ever since her talk with Captain Staunton, her spiritual life had been wonderfully brightened; but it was so trying now to have to give up her little class at the Sunday-school, and her visits to sick people, in both of which she had begun to take so keen an interest. Still she hoped that her ailments were only temporary, and that the spring at least would see her at work once more.

One bright warm afternoon, she went down to the pond with her mother. One swallow, the last lingering remnant of the summer, was skimming uneasily over the smooth glassy surface.

"The last swallow!" said her mother sadly, when they had watched its flight for several minutes in silence.

Something in the tone caught Christie's ear.

"Never mind, mother, we shall have plenty more in the spring," she said, cheerily.

There was no answer; and in that moment there came to her the first suspicion of that which was becoming only too fast a certainty to all around her. Christie's next spring would be in the land where "everlasting spring abides."

She said nothing then, only walked home a little more languidly than usual; but when her mother went into the dairy to meet the pails, as they were carried in by the girl who had come to do the work which had once fallen to her share, and she was left alone in the firelight, she sat down on a low stool, and, as it were, brought out the thought which had dropped dimly into her mind, and looked at it. Death! How strange it seemed to sit there, with the play of the warm blaze upon her outstretched hands, and think of those hands mouldering into dust under the brown earth. It sent a nameless horror through her whole frame, and she cowered down motionless and trembling. But not for long. She truly loved her Saviour, and

rested in His love for her ; and often and often she had pictured to herself " what it would be to be there," where her eyes should see Him in His beauty. And now, as if a voice spoke to her, there came into her very heart the verse which Captain Staunton had quoted on that never-to-be-forgotten night when Tom had yielded himself to God !

"From out the dazzling majesty,
Gently He'll lay His hand on thee,
Whispering, 'Beloved, lov'st thou Me?'
'Twas not in vain I died for thee !
'Tis I ; be not afraid."

It was enough. A friend stood beyond the dark river, whose rushing waters had for the moment drowned her hope ; and, as the thought broke on her, that perhaps before long she might hear that voice, her heart gave a great leap, and her eyes swam with tears. But still it was not unmingled brightness. There was home, and all that the word meant, to leave ; and she sat long and dreamily, striving to picture her own empty place, and the broken, vacant hearts she would leave behind. When her father and mother

Outwardly life went on much as usual at the farm. In spite of the dark cloud which was mounting higher and higher into their sky, they instinctively strove to live as though there were no difference—as if the concealment of the sorrow were its removal. To neither father nor mother could Christie dare to speak ; and though Mr. Severn's visits were her greatest earthly solace, she never happened to see him alone, and dared not speak of that which was uppermost in her thoughts ; whilst he, uncertain how far she knew the truth, and entirely happy as to her acceptance of salvation in Christ, felt that he could not, unasked, take upon himself to break what might prove a shock to her, when there was no absolute necessity for doing so. There was a sort of half understanding between them, but not the full confidence which would have enabled him to give her the help she needed. Doubtless this was all ordered, that she might go alone into the dark shadow of death, to grasp there the hand of Him who should before long reveal Himself to her, in a sunshine which should last "till she came to the end of valley,"

and He "brought her out into a wealthy place." It was a time of deep spiritual conflict with Christie. Round about the many gleams of light was always clinging the cold mist of the fear of death, which she could not overcome; and as she became conscious that she was daily growing weaker, she longed, with a passionate longing, for a realizing faith, which should enable her to say, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." She trusted God for her past and present, but could not trust Him to lead her dryshod through the flood.

One bright warm December afternoon—one of those days which sometimes come in the heart of the month as a foretaste of the far-away spring—she was sitting, warmly wrapped in shawls, on the sheltered terrace overlooking the garden. Her mother had left her for a time; and she sat in the dreamy stillness of the early afternoon, looking over the bright landscape, hardly thinking, only dwelling on the subject which seemed now to have become part of her very self. It was not a good day with her. She felt alone—so alone, almost as if God had forsaken her.

The birds were very busy that afternoon chirping and rustling among the leaves, now and then taking little upward flights, and then dropping down with a twitter of content to their warm nests. Christie watched them a little bitterly. They flew so close that she heard the beat of their wings against the air, and it recalled the swallows she would never see again. As she sat there, a single feather fell from one of the little brown wings, and floated down into her lap. She took it up, and looked at its delicate handiwork and perfect formation. God had wondrously fashioned that tiny feather, and there it lay uselessly in her hand. But in a moment came the answer, not only to this doubt, but to her own secret questionings. "Not one of these is forgotten before God." It would be hard to tell the lessons she learned as she sat there, gazing at the little feather, and then up into heaven. God himself was preaching to her, and she "knew his voice." She was reaching out into the light.

Before long a heavy footstep fell upon the gravel, and Tom appeared.

"You here, Christie!" he exclaimed, "that's prime!" and sat down on a large stone at her side, after ascertaining with a strange rough tenderness that she was well covered up, and did not feel cold. Their eyes met as he wrapped a shawl more closely round her feet.

"You look happier, Christie," he said, after contemplating her for a moment.

"I am," she answered. "O, Tom! I have been very wicked, very unbelieving, but you can't tell how I've dreaded dying, and almost felt as if it were hard of God to take me away when I'm so young."

It was the first time she had spoken freely, and she wondered at herself when the words were uttered; but Tom took it very quietly.

"I was thinking a deal of you just now, Christie," he said, in his slow, unimpassioned way. "I'll tell you how it was. I'd been doing a lot of odd jobs, and was pretty well through; so I thought as I'd have a look at that little Testament the young squire give me before he went. So I stands up agin the wood-stack, and gets it out, and I'd not read but one verse, when

I hear your father holloing for me, and I must be off. So I got no more."

"Well?" inquired Christie, not quite seeing the point of connection between herself and Tom's interrupted studies.

"Well, maybe you've seen the verse before, but I'd not, and it stuck by me; so I turned down the page, and here it is."

After sundry divings in his pockets, Tom produced the little volume, and slowly finding the place, read aloud, marking each word with his finger: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Then he looked round at his cousin and waited, evidently expecting her to speak.

"Well?"

"Well," said Tom, fairly driven to fashioning his thoughts into words, "it was them three words 'The last enemy' that stuck by me. Perhaps if I'd had time to read more, I'd not have thought of them; but I hadn't, so I did."

"And what did you think?"

"Well, I thought of you, and how near you were to death; and then I thought what death

was, how it would only just be shutting your eyes and opening them to see Jesus—and I a'most wondered at its being called an enemy at all. But, to let that pass, supposing it is an enemy, it's very soon over, and it's *the last*. I think of that, Christie, *the last*, for ever and ever and ever! Never another enemy, and no more trouble, or sorrow, or crying, or cold, or hard work. I a'most wish I was as near my last enemy as you."

Christie could hardly answer. The cloud was gone. How strange it seemed that her dull silent cousin should have spoken to her the words she needed, a very message from the Father, by whom she too was "not forgotten."

"Thank you, Tom," she said, as her mother came to hurry her in; "you've done me a whole world of good."

It was the last time she ever went outside the doors.

She was failing rapidly now, sinking away in uninterrupted light and peace; and now that the clouds were gone, she was able to break through the former reserve, and speak freely of what

lay before them all. It was a peacefully happy time, not very much suffering; and the shadow of the coming parting made every hour precious.

X.

"His daughter also went through the river, singing."

—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

"We waited long beside the brink,
To say good-by forever,
And thought our hearts would break as she
Went singing through the river.

"'For ever?' No ; but for a time
Death shall our hearts dissever ;
We look in paradise to meet,
Beyond the swelling river.

"More homelike now our heaven appears,
Since one we loved went over ;
'Tis but a little way to look
Across the shining river.

"Only a step we then need take
When we go o'er forever ;
We'll clasp His hand, and gladly too
Go singing through the river."

"SOMETHING'S the matter, mother," said
Christie one morning, when Mrs. Elwood
came up to her room again after breakfast and a

somewhat longer absence than usual. Her mother turned away to the window ; but she was utterly incapable of concealing anything, and gave up the attempt.

"My dear, I don't know what father'll say. He bid me not tell you, as it would only upset you for nothing ; but my poor heart is nearly breaking, and you know I never can help crying."

"Give me the letter, mother," said Christie, the nervous twitching of her mother's hand in her pocket assuring her that the origin of all this grief lay hidden in its depths. Mrs. Elwood meekly complied.

"It's Jack, my dear ; very bad news."

"He's not been and dishonored Christ !" said Christie, her eyes flashing with something of their old fire.

"Ah, my dear ! don't speak so," sighed her mother, and she was subdued in a moment. The letter was from Mrs. Chase, and was written from Torquay. Christie only skimmed the first page, which was chiefly about herself, and turning to the second, read :

"And now, my dear cōusin, I have that to

relate to you which I am sure will grieve you all ; but 'ill news flies apace,' and I would rather tell you the truth than have ill-natured reports get to you. Poor Jack has got into trouble. I always will say not altogether by his own fault, but still I fear he is much to blame, not only in the sight of man, but of God. I must tell you that Mr. Harry has been away a good while with his mother's relations in Scotland ; and poor John, I do think he missed him worse than any of us, though indeed the whole house is dull enough without him. Of course it was not becoming my position to have much to do with him ; but still I saw him when I could, and I do believe the poor lad was very glad of a friendly word, for he seemed to get low-spirited, and told me more than once that he hadn't been so happy since we came here, and he didn't think he was going on altogether well since the captain left. But to make a long story short, Newton, the head coachman, has never had a liking to him since he was changed ; and on Tuesday something was amiss with one of the new carriage horses, and he charged it upon

John. The master lost his temper, and swore at him awful; and Jack was every bit as bad as he, and used language as was most unbecoming in a servant to his master, not to mention being a Christian. He denied the whole thing, and said it was Newton's doings; and I will say I believe him, for no one ever caught him in a lie at the worst of times, and I've no opinion myself of the other. Still he is the older servant of the two, and a favorite with the squire, and of course John's behavior is in no way to be excused. So he was sent off at a moment's notice, and I'd not even so much as 'Good-day' from him. William, the second footman, whom I think to be a well-disposed young man, and who was very friendly with Jack, told me he seemed almost beside himself. Master had paid him his wages, and he flung down the money in the stable, and left it there rolling about among the straw. William picked it up, and brought it to me, when he couldn't find him anywhere; and I'm keeping it for him, poor lad. He'll want it some time, I reckon. But he's gone, sure enough; and we have not heard so much as a

word of him. He says to William, 'I can never face any of them again. I've dishonored God, and that's the worst of it all, and I'll go and be shot.' Of course we all know an angry man will say many a thing he never does; but it's a bad business, and a very heavy affliction for me, for I fear me much that it has brought great shame upon the holy name wherewith he was called. This is a long letter for me, my dear, and my time has expired; so no more at present, from your affectionate cousin and well-wisher,

"PRISCILLA CHASE."

Christie finished amid blinding tears. Then she folded the letter, and lay back exhausted.

"Well, my dear?" said her mother, stepping up to the bedside, and then, with a changed look, moistening her lips with water.

"He'll come back, mother," she said, faintly, when she could speak. *I know* he loved Jesus."

It was her constant solace through the following days, while she lay almost at the gates of the city, waiting till they should be opened to let her in. Her thoughts dwelt very much upon

him. "Jack was the first to tell us about the meeting; and oh, to think of this! But I know God will bring him back; I don't mean to us, but to Him."

It was the only cloud amidst the sunshine of the last days, and even in that the silver lining showed very brightly. She was too near heaven to see things otherwise than in the light of eternity; and though she grieved bitterly over her cousin's fall, it was with the continual consolation, "but he will be brought back; I know he will."

One night, when her mother, worn out by the long watching, had given up her place to Debby for a few hours, Christie, who had been restless for some time, called her to her side.

"Debby," she said, "I'm sure the end isn't far off, and it hurts me to talk, but I must speak to you. Debby, are you ready to die?"

The old woman lifted up her hands with a startled look, and then dropped them and covered her face.

"Debby, I'm going to die, but I haven't one bit of fear now. I know it will only be to shut

my eyes upon all your dear faces, and open them to see Jesus; but I couldn't dare to die if I hadn't known He had washed all my sins away. O Debby, promise me you'll meet me in heaven! Do, Debby, do," she urged, as she waited vainly for a response. .

"My dear, I'm not fit to be in heaven," she said, at last. "I'm best fit for hell, and I shall go there. If I'd turned when I was your age, Christie, I might have had a chance. I'd as good opportunities as most—better than many, maybe—but I made no use of them, and it's too late now." She spoke with the hard-determined tone of conviction. Before Christie could answer, she went on:

Then, this last year, the Lord gave me another chance, and then I felt Him striving hard with me. But, thinks I, 'One can strive as well as another,' and I strove too; and I just grew harder and harder, as I saw one after another of you changed, and you was the worst of all, Christie."

"I?"

"Yes, I may as well tell you, for you'll never

let on to any one now. I've just made an idol of you, child, though I don't suppose it looked much like it; but I'll be bound your own mother hasn't set much more store on you than I did. You'll wonder why. I never told any one else, but I'll tell you. Years and years ago I thought I was an honest married wife, but I'd been deceived. I never found out till my baby was four months old that its father had been married before, and his lawful wife was in America. Then he left me, and all the better too; and in a week or two my baby took sick and died; and that's why I've been set against all the world ever since. But when I came here, you was a little baby, just six months old, and it seemed like my own baby come back to me; and now God's going to take you away from me. I think I would have given in two or three months ago, but I saw this fresh trouble a-coming on, and I couldn't stand it; so I hardened myself up again."

"Poor Debby, dear Debby!" repeated Christie, caressingly. "I never, never dreamed of all that. Oh, I wish I'd known, and I'm sure I'd

have been better to you! Oh, do forgive me, Debby!"

"There ain't nothing to forgive," said Deborah, shortly, and fell into her usual silence.

It was several minutes before Christie spoke again. Then she said:

"Debby, I'm very glad God is taking me away. I think I've been like a cork in a bottle, keeping out the blessing from you, though I didn't know it. But I'm sure He wouldn't hurt you so, unless He meant it to bring you to Him; so I'm quite certain He loves you still, and that it's not too late. I can't talk any more about it, though; I'm too tired. But just promise me you'll let Him save you, and you'll meet me in heaven. Promise me, do promise me; there's a dear Debby."

"I can't," said the old woman at last, falling on her knees by the bed.

"Then say you'll meet your own baby."

In a sort of smothered sob Debby promised, and Christie turned round and fell asleep. All through the remaining hours of the night the fight went on. Again and again Debby rose from

her knees in despair, but as often that solemn promise to the dying girl drove her back to the place where she knew peace and safety were to be found. God hadn't said to her, "Seek thou My face" in vain; and when, in the gray dawn, Christie opened her eyes, and feebly asked for some milk, they fell upon a face blotted and stained indeed with many tears, but wearing a look of peace.

"I am forgiven," she said, as she held the cup to the hot lips. It was her only verbal confession of faith; but it was enough.

It was growing dark the next afternoon, when Tom's step, heavy still, though his boots were left below, was heard upon the stairs. He opened the door gently, and looked in. Christie had been lying very still for an hour or two, but now she opened her eyes, and welcomed him in. He stepped up to the bedside, with one hand behind his back.

"Guess what I've brought you, Christie."

But he could not tantalize her then, even for a moment.

"Snowdrops! Oh, how lovely!"

She took the two little frail flowers out of the great rough hand, and looked lovingly at them for a long time. Her father came up-stairs too, and sat down silently beside the fire. Presently she spoke again, in a confused, weary tone :

"Tom, do try and remember it. It won't come to me."

"What is it, Christie?"

"I don't know—something Stephen Hepburn was saying here one night, ever so long ago, about the snow and the snowdrops and the golden doors; I've tried to remember it over and over again. I didn't like to ask him about it, but I must have it now. Do remember it: I must hear it before I die."

Poor Tom, he could sooner have lifted the house.

"What is it?" she repeated, uneasily. It's the frosty skies, and the snow, and the golden doors; oh, do tell it to me!"

"You'd better go and fetch Hepburn," said her father at last; and Tom only too gladly departed on his errand. He could not bear those restless pleadings.

Before they returned, the short January day had closed in, and the moonlight was lying in white streaks across the floor and walls, and over the bed. Christie would not let the candles be lighted, or the moon and stars shut out.

It was weeks since they last met, and Stephen had never expected to see her again. He paused for a moment at the door of the room, then went quietly in, and stood beside her.

"You are nearly home," he said, smiling his grave smile. "I give you joy." Then, before she could ask him, he continued, "I think this was what you wanted :

' Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

' As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round :

So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee ;
So in this earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.

Break up the heavens, O Lord, and far,
Through all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, Thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

‘He lifts me to the golden doors ;
The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strews her lights below,

And deepens on and up : the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits
To make me pure of sin.

The Sabbath of Eternity,
One Sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with His bride !”

He went through with it very steadily till the last line, but there his voice broke. There was dead silence in the little room when he had finished, and for some minutes afterwards. Then Christie opened her eyes.

“Thank you, Stephen ; good-by. Debby, good-by ; you know you’re to meet us both in heaven. Good-by, Tom, father, mother, dear, dear mother, good-by. You must not cry, darling mother. Oh, how beautiful it is ! every

one here loves Jesus." She pointed slowly to each as they stood round—"mother, and father, and Debby, and Tom, and Stephen—all." She had done with earth now, and turned towards the moonlit sky. "Think, Jesus is up there, up there; and in a minute I'll be there too. 'And His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads'—His dear name. Oh, I didn't have to plead it in vain! He heard me, and answered me. 'His name shall be in their foreheads'—*in mine.*"

"Thus she came up to the gate."

PART II.

“REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOR, AND DO ALL THY WORK ; BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE SABBATH OF THE LORD THY GOD : IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MAN-SERVANT, NOR THY MAID-SERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY GATES : FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM IS, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY ; WHEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT.”

I.

"A little child shall lead them."

"**L**OOK, Bobby, ain't them beauties?"
"Booties!" responded Bobby, sympathetically, withdrawing his thumb for a moment from his mouth, to clasp his hands in an attitude of almost devotional admiration.

"See, Bobby, now I'll learn yer yer colors. That big stick there next the door, that's red; and that one next's yaller, and the next—now, Bobby, say what's the next? like mother's things when she washes them."

"B'ack."

"Bobby, Bobby, yer'll never larn nothin' if
• yer don't take more pains. White!—say, white. Now, there's a brave boy." And as the little pupil obeyed, Cherry went on. "There, now, if

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I'd only a copper I'd buy yer one of them sticks; but it ain't no good wishing; so we'll tell the colors again."

The two children stood before the window of a large sweet-shop in the Strand. Far up above Bobby's head the panes were filled with heaps of many-colored sugar-plums. The very sight was a glimpse of fairy land. What must it be to go inside and buy such treasures! Think of possessing one of those sugar-sticks! Cherry fairly held her breath at the very thought. They were a forlorn-looking little couple, though the boy bore traces of some attempt at nicety. His plaid frock, now far too small for him, was carefully patched and darned, and the plentiful crop of red hair, which bespoke his northern parentage, was in tolerably good order. But Cherry's frock would scarcely hold together much longer, and the article which had fallen back from her head was a mere apology for a bonnet. Still the dark hair, which it was supposed to cover, was fine and curling; and though it was not a very clean little face, there was a bright glow about it, and a laugh in the

dark eyes, which made it pleasant to look upon.

"O Bobby, I do wish I could buy yer one of them sugar-sticks," she sighed, when the lesson was over : and they took another lingering look before they went away. "I wish father'd only give me another penny."

Cherry's speech was cut short by a jump. There was a hand on her shoulder ; but when she turned round, with a vague terror lest it should be that of one of the dreaded "pelece," she saw that its owner was a tall man, who stood with his pipe in his mouth at the corner.

"Look here, little one," he said, "will I do instead of father?" And then Cherry saw a penny between the finger and thumb. She paused. Could it be possible that her dream was realized? Were she and Bobby really to go into that palace of delight and buy red and yellow sugar-sticks? Surely the man must be amusing himself at her expense ; he could never mean to part with such a treasure for nothing.

He looked on lazily, whilst Cherry gazed open-mouthed at the penny, till Bobby tugged at her

hand and again withdrew his thumb from his mouth to point.

"See Cherry, see."

A curtsy was quite beyond the sphere of Cherry's accomplishments; but she took the penny from the outstretched hand with a twinkle in her eye.

"Thank ye, sir," she said; "I'll do *you* a good turn, if ever I get the chance."

The man laughed, a harsh grating laugh. Ah, he little knew how faithfully that promise would be fulfilled. The gift had been the mere impulse of a generous nature. He could ill spare the penny, for it was his last, and he knew hardly where to turn for another; but he little thought in what golden streams of wealth it would be repaid to him. He left the children to go into the shop alone, and when after some time they returned, Bobby flourishing on high a piece of red sugar-stick, he merely nodded to them from his position against the lamp-post.

"We must be getting home now, *guv'nor*," said Cherry. "It's getting late. Good-by."

He watched the little figures round the corner

and up the sloppy street till they were hid by other passengers ; then knocked the dead ashes out of his pipe, stamped his cold feet upon the dirty pavement, and went moodily on down the Strand.

Cherry and her little charge clambered merrily up the steep dark staircase which led to their homes, opposite rooms at the top of a crowded house in one of the hundred narrow streets which spread like a network over the space between Covent Garden and Holborn.

"Mother's in," said Bobby, as he descried the fire-light beneath the chink of their door. Cherry pushed it open, and the two went in. It was a tidy room for its situation, scantily furnished enough, but still tolerably clean. A tired-looking woman was busied beside the small fire-place, and even whilst her little son climbed on her knee, and displayed his treasure, she reached out her thin hand for the shoe which she was binding.

"Father ain't in, Mrs. Mac," said Cherry, returning from a visit of inspection to her own territories.

"I've brought my mug and bread, if you'll let me tea along of you and Bobby."

It was rather a festival, that little tea-party, brightened by the important division of the red sugar-stick, and the history, briskly told by Cherry, of its munificent donor, who, in her eyes, took rank at least among fairy princes.

"Mrs. Mac," as the child called her, stitched swiftly and silently on. Her shoe-binding was the only support of herself and her little boy. Cherry's father need not have been so badly off as he was, for though his work was not always regular, he got good wages when he had it to do; but then drink, the curse of thousands of working men, was his weakness. Certainly he was not so bad as many. To use his own expression, he "knew when he had enough." But it was the company he loved; and he would sit hour after hour throwing away the money which should have brought warmth and comfort to his child. Still she was a bright strong little thing; and, her standard being somewhat depressed by being set by the majority of the fathers she saw around her, she considered her father a very

good man on the whole. He never beat her; gave her enough to live upon, though not much more; and when he came home late, would tumble into bed without making a disturbance. Upon the whole, the occupants of both rooms were considered very respectable, and accordingly held their heads becomingly high.

When Bob was in bed, Cherry returned to her own room. There was no fire, and only a little bit of candle; but that didn't matter. She had no need for either, for she was bent on enjoying a pleasure which she had lately discovered, compared with which, all the sweet-shops in the Strand and Holborn put together were as nothing. She put on her old bonnet and a shawl, which had been her mother's, opened the door, and closed it noiselessly behind her, slipped down-stairs, and through the narrow court into the street. There she was safe from pursuit, even if Mrs. Mac should take it into her head to leave her stitching, and look into the opposite room. She breathed more freely as she threaded her way through courts and alleys, till she emerged before the broad front of Covent Gar-

den Opera-House. Could anything be more charming? Hidden among the crowd, now pushing before one, and now before another, she could catch glimpses of carriages and footmen, and beautiful ladies, clad in all the colors of the rainbow, and glittering with jewels. It was Elysium.

To-night she was particularly fortunate. She wormed her way to the very front, so near that she could gaze into the ladies' faces, and almost touch their dresses. Presently a footman bid her stand back, and pushed her with unnecessary roughness. She was a little hurt, and a great deal frightened.

"Leave that little girl alone, will you?" said a voice beside her; and when Cherry looked up, she saw her afternoon friend, with his hand full of play-bills, which he was selling at the doors. Alone as she was, Cherry quite felt that she had found a protector, and she stayed beside him till, the performance having begun, the crowd lessened.

"How did you get here, little one?" he asked, when he was free to give his attention to her.

"I came by myself; I know the way quite well. I've been three times now; and oh, ain't it lovely!"

"Pretty well," said the man. "Where's Bobby?"

"Oh, Bobby, he's in bed. His mother allers puts him up early in cold weather, 'cos then he keeps warm, and she can let the fire out, and save coals."

"Isn't she your mother too?"

"No; I ain't got no mother. She's been dead, ever so many years—oh, a great many. But I've got a father, and Bobby ain't got that; none to speak of, at least."

"Is yours a good father?"

Cherry paused. The conversation was getting close now. It was strange why this man should care to stay talking with her. He thought so too himself, yet there was something fascinating to him in the little bright fearless face, which, as he stood a step or two lower down, was almost on a level with his own; and which, though in many ways utterly alike, brought back to him recollections of another face unseen

for years—never to be seen again. He repeated his question.

"Yes," said Cherry, having looked him well over, and decided him to be trustworthy—"yes, I think he is, as fathers go; but I've no great opinion of them."

"That'll no do," answered her companion, laughing. "Now, how are you going to get home?"

"Oh, I'll see to that. Shall you be here another night?" she asked, more timidly, as they went down the steps.

"I suppose I shall; I don't know what else to do. I've made rather a good time of it to-night;" and he clinked the coins in his pocket. "That was empty when I began."

"What! hadn't yer a copper?" asked Cherry, a new light dawning upon her.

"No; I gave you the last this afternoon."

The child stood still. It sank very deep down into her heart, for poor children know, as rich cannot, what the last penny means.

"I love you," she said, very decidedly. Then, with a sudden motion, as they reached her cor-

ner, she sprang from him, waved good-night, and disappeared in the dark alley, on her way home.

He stood still a long time in the gloomy street, unheeding the roll of the carriages and omnibuses, or the noise of the passers-by. Unknowingly there had fallen upon the stony heart the first softening drop. For the first time for many years, he had something to care for.

He watched anxiously next night among the crowd, but his little girl did not come. The following evening, however, he saw the earnest face peering about. He slightly altered his own position, and she worked her way up to him, and stood still beside him, enjoying her treat.

"Why didn't you come last night?" he asked, when it was over. "I looked for you."

"I couldn't. Father was in, and I had to stay at home. But he's always out of Saturdays; so I came in good time to-night; and what d'yer think I've done? I put father's old coat all in a bundle inside the bed; and then, if Mrs. Mac comes to look for me, she'll feel that, and think it's me asleep." And Cherry laughed at her own cleverness.

"What do they call you?" he asked, abruptly.

"Cherry."

"Cherry! that's a queer name."

"Is it? Father told me once, as the first time he ever see mother, she were calling out 'Cherry ripe.' She sold fruit, you know. And it weren't but a little bit after as they went and got married; and then, when I was born, father said he'd have me called Cherry, because mother used to call it so pretty. I've got her wedding-ring in a little box at the bottom of the chest at home"—she went on confidentially—"and her marriage-lines, and something about me, and the baby as was born when mother died. I don't know what it is, but it's writing; and father says I must never lose it."

"What's your name?" she asked, presently.

"My name? Well, you can call me Ned Brown."

"Mr. Ned Brown," repeated Cherry, thoughtfully. "Then, I suppose your name's Edward?"

"I suppose it is."

"And where do you live?"

"Nowhere."

"Nowhere? Oh, Mr. Ned, you must live somewhere."

"No; I just live anywhere, wherever I can. I sleep in a lodging-house, if I can pay for it; and if I can't I don't. If I can buy breakfast, I have it; and if I can't, I don't."

"But don't you get very cold and hungry?"

"Yes, very often; but it doesn't matter. The sooner it's all over the better."

Cherry was silenced. The words, the tone, the look were all so despairing.

"I'm real sorry for yer," she said at last. "I wish I could help you, but I'm afraid I can't. I must go home now, or I'll be late, and Mrs. Mac may find out. Will you be here on Monday?"

"Yes, I expect I shall every night till I tell you no. And Cherry, look here, if you like, you can tell Mrs. Mac you've a friend who takes care of you; and then you won't have to put your father's coat to bed, or have your pleasure spoiled by thinking of her finding you out."

Cherry did not much appreciate the permission; she preferred free and independent action to Mrs. Mac's surveillance. But when she got

home, and found she had been discovered, she was glad enough to avail herself of it; and with a queer mixture of defiance and fear she told her story. Mrs. Mac was very doubtful as to the expediency of the whole proceeding; but Cherry said that if any difficulty was made, she would ask her father, and was quite sure he would let her go, which Mrs. Mac thought far from improbable. She felt interested too in the strange man who had won Cherry's little heart; and not being a woman of much forethought or judgment, she decided to let things be, and leave the child to herself.

II.

“Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.”

NEXT day Cherry and Bobby were out on one of their usual peregrinations through distant streets. Cherry was not fond of Sunday. True, the shops in their immediate neighborhood were as much open on that day as on any other ; but her taste was for the broader and gayer streets, and there, instead of the bustling crowd and brilliant windows, nothing was to be seen but blank shutters, though certainly some of the dresses were very fine. They were passing through a narrow street on their way home, when her attention was attracted by several children of

her own class standing about an open door on the opposite pavement. She drew up and looked at them. There was a window whose small panes were filled by many white papers, with large letters printed upon them. There were also books of divers sizes lying open; and above the door was a colored lamp, with printing on the front and sides. As she looked, an elderly man came down the steep stairs, which faced the street.

"Now then, little people," he said; "up with you; you'll be late."

Then his eye fell on the two across the way. He deliberated a moment, then stepped over.

"Wouldn't you like to come up, my dear?" he asked, stooping down and peering at Cherry through his spectacles.

"I dunno," replied the child. "What's up there?"

"School, my dear. Can you read it over the door?—'Ragged School.' Just for such little boys and girls as you and your brother. I think you'd like to come up now and see some pretty pictures, wouldn't you?" he added, persuasively.

Cherry hesitated. She had not been born and bred in London for nothing. She considered herself very wide-awake; and so, in truth, she was. What object had this man in inviting her up-stairs? But then she had seen other boys and girls go up in safety, who looked very much of the same flesh and blood as herself; yes, and at that moment a boy scuttled up-stairs, who had only just finished turning a somersault on the pavement. That looked well. Cherry decided to go.

"Come along, Bobby," she said, cheerfully; "we'll go and be taught."

It was a long low room into which they were ushered, closely filled with children, who were arranged into classes, and in the midst of each class a teacher was seated. A gentleman stood at a desk in one corner; and, as they entered, he rang a little bell and called for silence.

"New scholars, Mackenzie?" he said, as they passed. "Let them stand here, and we'll arrange them by-and-bye."

It was a wonderful sight to Cherry. The gentleman began reading aloud, and when he

stopped there was a shuffling of feet and a scraping of forms, and the whole school stood up and began singing together—loud, inharmonious singing many might have thought it. To Cherry it was heavenly. She could have jumped as they sang again and again :

“ Oh, that will be joyful,
Joyful, joyful, joyful
When we meet to part no more.”

Then there was another shuffling, and all knelt down. She and Bobby remained throughout where they were first placed, gazing up at the gentleman. But he shut his eyes, and began speaking again slowly, and then Cherry found that he was speaking to God. She had heard of Him sometimes. Mrs. Mac used to say, “ God help us,” when she had no food or coals left ; and sometimes when her father came in tipsy, and lost his temper, he would talk about Him in no measured tones. She knew too that He lived somewhere up in the sky, and that He did dreadful things to people. She never thought much about Him, for it frightened her ; but the gentleman did not seem at all afraid. He was looking

up with a smiling face, and Cherry watched him with great wonder and interest, till he said, "For Jesus' sake, Amen ;" and the children responded, "Amen ;" and the quiet was over.

Almost before she knew, the gentleman had sat down on the low step of the desk, and drawn her and Bobby towards him.

"What's your name, little girl?" he asked.

"Cherry ; and he's Bobby."

"And where do you live?"

Cherry described, not very lucidly.

"Did you ever hear about God?" asked the gentleman again.

Cherry confided the measure of her knowledge with a quaint shrewdness, which was very telling.

"Don't you know anything about the Lord Jesus?" was the next question.

"Nuffin'," said Cherry, decidedly ; "never heard tell of such a person." Then, with the sudden flash of an idea, "Does he live at the opera?"

"You poor little thing! what do you know about the opera?"

Cherry told the story with great animation.

"No," said her listener, when she had done, "He doesn't live there, but in a far more beautiful place. The people are all dressed in white there, and they have beautiful gold crowns on their heads, and gold harps in their hands, and they are always making music and singing"—

"I know," interrupted Cherry. "There's a man with a harp as plays down at the Rose and Crowns; and ain't it lovely?"

"Well, little Cherry, what do you think? In this place where the Lord Jesus lives the streets are all paved with gold, and the walls arn't made of bricks and stone, but of bright shining stones like what you saw on the ladies, only very large. And no one ever cries there, or is sick, or cross, or unhappy, but they are as happy as they can be all the day long."

Cherry and Bobby were both listening with wide-opened eyes.

"Do you know what that place is called, Cherry?"

She shook her head.

"It's called Heaven. And there are lots of little boys and girls there as well as grown-up

people ; and do you know, the Lord Jesus would like you and Bobby to go there and be happy forever."

"I don't b'lieve He would," said Cherry, incredulously. "Just look at my frock!"

"Jesus won't mind about that. He gives every one a new dress who goes there. But do you know how you are to get there?"

Another shake of the head. It was almost too wonderful.

"I'll tell you. Heaven is up above the sky"—

"That's where God lives," interrupted Cherry ; "and I don't want to go where He is. He ain't kind."

"That's a mistake, Cherry," said the gentleman, gravely. "God is the very kindest Friend I have, and He is your Friend too, and loves you very much—more than your own father can."

"I don't think father loves me much—not as much as Mrs. Mac loves Bobby even ; and I heard her say once as she wished the Lord 'ud take him."

"Well," said the gentleman, "don't you love any one ? You love Bobby, don't you?"

But Jesus didn't want us to go there ; so he said He would be punished instead of us, that we might go to heaven. And this is how he was punished. He had never done one wicked thing, but bad men took Him and laid Him on a great cross of wood, and then they drove big nails through His hands and feet, and put a crown of thorns on His head, and lifted Him up, and He hung there till He died."

The quick tears rushed into Cherry's eyes. What heart ever heard that sad, majestic story for the first time, untouched ?

"They took Him down then, and laid Him in a grave ; but three days afterwards the grave was empty. Jesus was alive again ; and now He has gone back to live in heaven, and He wants us all to go and live there with Him."

"Is it true ?"

"Quite, quite true. If He hadn't done that, we could never have got there. Suppose Bobby had been naughty, and his mother was going to beat him, and you asked her to let you be beaten instead of him, would she beat Bobby as well as you ?"

"Why, no ; what would have been the use of me being beaten if she did that? In course she wouldn't."

"Well, little girl, Jesus was punished instead of you ; and so God won't send you and me to hell as we deserve, but lets us go to heaven. He couldn't punish Jesus and us both, if we trust in Him." The words were spoken gravely, but with an under-current of triumph which seemed to carry them home to the little listening heart.

She stood still for a moment, pondering over the wondrous story. Then she suddenly clasped her hands.

"Oh, it's lovely, it's lovely! Then we'll all go to heaven. Oh, I love Him for it; I love Him, I do!"

"'As soon as they hear of Me they shall obey Me,'" said the gentleman to himself. "Cherry, you like to please people who have been good to you, don't you?"

"Ay."

"Then you must try and please Jesus."

"I dunno how."

"That's why we want you to come to school here every Sunday afternoon, and then you'll learn how to please Him, and all about the wonderful things He did. Will you come?"

"I believe yer! and Bobby too. And will you always talk to us?"

"No," said the gentleman, smiling; "I have something else to do; but you shall have a very kind teacher, and you'll like to hear her talk. Come with me."

He led them down the room to a class at the further end.

"Mrs. Mackenzie, can you find a little more room?"

A bright comely face was turned round. "I doubt I can, sir; but the little boy's too young for my class."

"Oh, please, I must keep Bobby by me," said Cherry; "I couldn't possible let him go. He'll sit still enough."

"I think you'll manage, Mrs. Mackenzie," said the gentleman; and Cherry lifted her little charge up on the form, with the motherliness which one sometimes sees in mere children. The superin-

tendent watched her. "That's a darling child," he whispered to Mrs. Mackenzie, and went away. There was not very much more time then, and Cherry paid but little heed to what was going on. She was absorbed in the story she had just heard, and sat unusually quiet till the bell rang again, and she saw her new friend at the desk. The first words he spoke, after giving out the number of the hymn, fixed her attention :

"Jesus, who lived above the sky,
Came down to be a man and die."

He read the hymn straight through, Cherry following every word with deepest interest. She knew what it meant now.

"You'll come next Sunday, Cherry?" said the gentleman, as they passed him at the top of the stairs, when the singing and prayer were over.

"That I will."

"And now try to be a good child, to please the Lord Jesus all the week, will you?"

Cherry looked up into the kind face. "Won't I!" she said.

They had got to the bottom of the stairs, when she heard herself called. She turned round, and waited till the gentleman got down.

"Cherry," he said, "does your father ever go anywhere of a Sunday night?"

"Yes; mostly to the 'Rose and Crown,' but sometimes to the 'Queen's Head,' and sometimes he goes for a walk; but he don't much care for that."

"I mean, does he never go to church or chapel?"

"Why, he? Them's for rich folk."

"Well, now, Cherry, ask him to come here to-night at seven o'clock. Mr. Mackenzie, who fetched you in, is the missionary; and he will speak. You can show him the way, can't you?"

"I don't believe father'll come."

"Well, you try," said the gentleman. "Wouldn't you like him to hear about the Lord Jesus? Suppose you ask God to make him come."

Cherry was not quite sure how to set about this; but when they got home, and she went

into the empty room, she stood in one corner, and shutting her eyes very tight, said, "O God, will you please to make father come and hear Mr. Mackenzie speak about Jesus; and, O Lord Jesus, I am so much obliged to you for being punished instead of me, and Bobby, and the gentleman, and all of us. Please make me a good girl, and make my man good too, and I won't go to the opera any more, if Mrs. Mac doesn't like it, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

She felt wonderfully happy after her prayer; and it was hardly a surprise to her when her father, who came in to tea in a very good humor, at last agreed just to go and have a look at the place. Not even Cherry's description of the pictures on the walls could make him promise to go inside. But when they got to the door, and he saw other men in their working-clothes going in, and women and children as shabbily clad as his own child, he moved slowly across the road, and, to Cherry's inexpressible delight, began mounting the staircase. The room felt very comfortable to-night: a fire was burning brightly at either end; the lamps were lit, and

there were red curtains against the little windows, and colored prints and texts all round the walls. It wasn't amiss, even after the "Rose and Crown," and he settled himself comfortably on one of the back seats, with Cherry at his side. His was not a character to be very quickly affected; but once or twice he felt that what was said had "taken effect," as he would have expressed it. Afar off he seemed to see a glimmer of light upon his dull life, whose only alternations had been between working and sleeping, drinking and starving. Mr. Mackenzie took his fancy. There was nothing of the gentleman attempted about him; plain, honest common sense, and a really earnest desire after the souls of others, was all he could boast. But he was one of those who are "great in the kingdom of heaven;" he did and taught the commandments of God.

"Isn't it a nice place, father?" said Cherry, when they were in the street again. "You'll come again next Sunday, won't you?"

"Maybe I will," answered her father, less gruffly than usual. He had been more pleased

than he was willing to own. Mr. Mackenzie had recognized his little friend of the afternoon, and came up to them after the service. His manner had caught the man's fancy.

"Good evening, sir," he had said; "I'm very glad to see you among us. I hope you may be able to come again." But there was no attempt at what Ratcliffe would have called "thrusting religion down his throat." Mr. Mackenzie saw the character of the man with whom he had to deal, and wisely added only a few words on general topics.

Next evening Cherry ran out to the opera-house. True to her word, she had volunteered to Mrs. Macdonald that she would not go if it were against her will; but Mrs. Mac, having expended all her forces in one engagement, made no objection, and merely bid Cherry mind she didn't get into mischief, and come straight home. The fine dresses and carriages had less charm than usual for her to-night; she was impatient for business to be over, and her man at leisure to attend to her. At last he turned round, but before he could speak, she began with eager

utterance and outstretched hands: "Oh, Mr. Ned! do you know anything about the Lord Jesus?"

She was cowed by the look she met—the look of an overtaken fugitive, terrified, shame-faced, brought to bay by his pursuer. He recovered himself in a moment.

"Look here, Cherry," he said; "never you speak to me about that again. Do you mind, I won't have it!"

Cherry looked at him; then, with childish dignity, she turned away.

"You're a bad man, Mr. Edward, if yer won't hear about Jesus. I won't talk to yer any more."

"Hush, Cherry!" he cried, catching her by both hands as she attempted to pass him. "Don't go away from me like that."

"You're bad," was her persistent reply.

"I know I'm bad, Cherry, as bad as bad can be; but I'm miserable, and you're the only thing I've got to comfort me. Listen, and I'll tell you. I knew all about Him once, and loved Him, too. Ay, I did, I loved Him," he repeated, fiercely;

‘but I’ve lost it all, Cherry, lost everything, lost myself. I shall never have it back again—never! And so I can’t bear to hear about it; it only makes me more miserable.”

“It made me happy,” said Cherry.

“Yes; you’re different. But you’re a child; you don’t know anything about such as I am; but it’s true what I say: you only make me more miserable by talking about it, and you don’t want to do that, do you, Cherry?”

“No,” she said softly; but it was a great weight upon her poor little heart, and she felt doubtful and uncomfortable about her man.

Her father was at home when she got in, quite sober, but very angry with her for being out; forbade her ever going again, and scolded both her and Mrs. Macdonald soundly. Cherry cried till she was tired, after she crept into her little bed. Then she remembered how she had prayed God to make her father go to the school, and he had gone. She sat up in bed, shut her eyes, and in the lowest whispers began, “O dear Lord Jesus, make my poor Mr. Ned good. Please make him happy. Take care of him, and get

him some work, and please let him have some money for a bed to-night. And please, O God, if I can't go to the opera any more, will you let me see him somewhere, and let us all be happy again? And let father be a good man too, for Jesus' sake. Amen." Then she went to sleep.

It was a long time before she saw Mr. Ned again. She took Bobby for long walks, sometimes down to the sweet-shop in the Strand, sometimes round by the opera-house, looking into the face of almost every passer-by, but none was the face she wanted to see. The worst of it all, to little Cherry's loving heart, was, that he should think she was not willing to come and see him any more. The sad look in his eyes came to her again and again, even in her dreams; and never did a night or morning pass without her asking God to bless him, and make him happy, and let her see him again. In the mean time, her home was greatly changed for the better. Her father's visits to the public-house became less and less frequent. He was out late still, but when he returned, it was not with the unsteady step, and savour of beer and

smoke which she had learned to dread. He would bring in a book, and sit reading till she dropped asleep, and she knew not how much longer. At last she found that on certain nights of the week, the ragged school was used as a working-men's reading-room, and here her father began to find greater attractions than those of the "Queen's Head," or even of the "Rose and Crown." Like many men of his class, he was capable, when not stupefied by drink, of pretty shrewd thought; and, naturally enough, his religious opinions were decidedly sceptical. Happily, the missionary was well able to meet him here. Many a friendly discussion the two held, interspersed now with home-thrusts, which made him begin to feel that, in spite of all his bravado, he might, after all, turn out to be a guilty sinner, needing a Mediator to stand between him and an offended God. In his anxiety to maintain a position which was fast becoming untenable, he began to search the Bible for the proofs of its inconsistency which Mr. Mackenzie demanded; and gradually the entrance of that Word began to give light to his

darkened mind and heart. He discovered too that the advocates of Christianity had something to say on their side even more distinguished for thought and learning than the infidel publications which he had read in his younger days. To his surprise he found that there existed volume after volume on the evidences of Christianity, written by men of weight and intellect; and he began to be ashamed of the foolish and shallow arguments which, in his former ignorance, he had believed to be impregnable. Cherry found a difference: he became a better father than she had ever imagined; the little room was more comfortable, and he even bought her a new frock, which Mrs. Mac made, and a new hat. But to her mind, no decoration could possibly equal the brightly-colored pledge-card which her father brought home and nailed above the mantelpiece. She regarded it as a friend, and never wearied of spelling out the letters which stated that on such a day, John Ratcliffe took the pledge to abstain, by God's help, from all intoxicating liquors. She was getting on nicely with her reading now and Sunday after Sunday, she and Bobby trotted

to their school, the earliest to arrive, and the last to leave. To her first friend, Mr. Forrester, Cherry was a constant source of interest. As he once said to his wife, "I declare I can feel real communion with that ~~said~~, little monkey as she is." And he would often stay behind to talk to her of the love that won our redemption at such a boundless price.

III.

“And wilt thou seek again
Thy howling waste, thy charnel-house and chain,
And with the demons be,
Rather than clasp thine own Deliverer’s knee?
Sure ’tis no Heaven-bred awe
That bids thee from His healing touch withdraw;
The world and He are struggling in thine heart,
And in thy reckless mood thou bidst thy Lord depart.”
—*Christian Year.*

ONE Sunday night, as Cherry and her father were coming home from the school, she suddenly bounded from his side to that of a man who stood leaning against a lamp-post.

“Mr. Ned, O Mr. Ned!” was all she could say; so great was her joy. The pleasure on his side, though quieter, was no less true.

“Why, my little Cherry,” he said, “I thought I was never going to see you again.”

“I couldn’t help it. Oh, I have so wanted to see you; but father said, I wasn’t never to go run-
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ning out of nights again, and I couldn't find you in the day time.—Father," as he came up, "here's my man!"

There was a little awkwardness. The genuine Englishman is not good at making new acquaintances; but Cherry was equal to the occasion.

"Father," she urged, under her breath, "do shake hands with him." And then somehow the three walked on together. In spite of his forlorn appearance, there was that indescribable something about Brown which rings true. Ratcliffe's was a thoroughly honest nature, and the two, by the good providence of God, seemed to understand and take to each other. From that time Mr. Ned was a frequent visitor in the little home, though all Ratcliffe's endeavors to get him to the reading-room failed. Upon that point he was immovable; and Cherry never dared to run the risk of recalling the terrible look, which sometimes haunted her even now.

On the same landing was a third little room, too tiny for a family, which had long been tenanted by an aged man. One day there were noisy rejoicings in his room; his son, a bluff,

hearty sailor, had come back from foreign parts in comparative wealth. He tucked his old father under his arm, and carried him off to spend his remaining days in the country village which had once been his home. The little room was not long vacant. Cherry propounded a grand idea in a confidential whisper to her father; and he proposed to Brown that he should take up his abode in this close neighborhood. Mr. Ned laughed at first, and said he shouldn't know what to do with a room all to himself. But he had picked up more stray bits of work lately; and besides, though he would not put himself in a position to claim one of the brilliant cards, he drank much less than formerly; so, with the remark, that if he found he couldn't pay the rent he should have to go, he took the little room, to Cherry's boundless delight. She scrubbed it out herself with infinite toil and pains, and took extreme pride in the arrangement of its scanty furniture. She thought no one in all the world was so happy as she, if only Mr. Ned would let her talk even as much as her father did of that which held the deepest place in her little heart. One day,



Christie Elwood.

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given up to save rent, and Cherry went to share Mrs. Macdonald's bed. She, poor woman, was happy enough to keep her shoe-binding; and a most welcome help had come, soon after the men fell out of work, in a letter from her husband, the father who was, as Cherry said, "nothing to speak of." He was a private in a cavalry regiment, and poor Mrs. Macdonald, captivated by his long legs and handsome uniform, had married him "without leave," to find out, only too late, how dreary a lot she had chosen. Drunken and dissipated, he cared but little for her and her child at the best of times; and, when the regiment was ordered abroad, she was naturally left at home to shift as well as she could. In all the years of his absence he had never written one line. Now he seemed to be turning over a new leaf, wrote penitently of his past neglect, and sent an order for money, promising more before very long. Poor woman, in her unexpected happiness, she wanted to divide the sum, small as it was, with her opposite neighbors. It was steadily refused, though Ratcliffe did not oppose her kindness to his child, who must otherwise some-

times have gone all day without a meal. The characteristic self-respect of the English working-man made him conceal his trouble as far as possible from his friends at the school ; but the good missionary and his wife suspected the state of matters, and sometimes forced help upon him. Still there were many in equal need, and, in spite of Mr. Forrester's liberality, they could give but little to each. The effect of the trouble upon the two men was very different. Though Ratcliffe was sometimes almost in despair, he was slowly creeping through all the darkness nearer to the light of the world. God began to be a reality to him ; and sometimes he almost thought that if Cherry were to ask him that question again, he might have said, " Yes." Brown, on the other hand, grew harder and harder. His very soul seemed cased in iron. Sometimes fits of terrible despondency would last for days ; and it was only by main force that Ratcliffe could get him past the door of the public-house. He began to have a dread of letting him out of his sight for a moment, and watched him as a father or an elder brother might have done. Through all those

weeks of close fellowship in suffering, Brown had never spoken of his past life.

One bitterly cold day Ratcliffe started on the weary search for work. Ned would not come; he said he felt ill, and he looked it. The other knew he must leave him, but signed to Cherry to follow him down-stairs. Within the doorway, he took her into his arms and kissed her, more than once. Then he pointed to the gilded letters round the roof of the "Rose and Crown."

"Cherry," he said, with a shaking voice, "you know why I'm afraid to leave him. You watch him. Be careful not to let him go out alone."

Poor child, she felt as if her very heart were breaking with its burden. All things seemed to be giving way under her tired feet. When her father had gone, she sat down on the stairs and prayed. In the strength of that prayer she went through the day. To her joy, Ned made no attempt to go out. All the morning he lay on the bed, neither moving nor speaking; nor would he take the scanty dinner which she pressed upon him.

"Cherry, I can't; don't ask me," he said, in the tone which she could never disobey.

It was early in the afternoon when she heard her father's step upon the stairs. She met him half-way, and found a resting-place in the strong arms.

"Is he safe?" he whispered.

"Quite. But oh, father," as she noticed a change in his face, "have you got work?"

They were in the room before he unclasped his arms, or answered. Then he said, rather sadly :

"I don't know, Cherry."

"But do you think it, father?"

He sat down wearily by the empty grate, and Cherry laid her head on his shoulder. Ned sat up on the bed, and looked at them. For a few moments no one spoke.

"I'm sorely tempted," said the father, at last. "I've been over the water—a weary tramp, but nothing if I could only take the work. Think of it, Cherry; eighteen shillings a week, at least. Why, it 'ud be a fortune now. Ah! but, darling, I didn't dare say I'd take it, for it's week-day

and Sunday both. The man's an old master of mine, and he said he'd wait till to-night. I must go and give the answer now, if I take it; he won't wait longer; and it's very good of him to wait so long. I've been up to the school, for I felt as there was no one I'd like to consult so well as Mr. Mackenzie; however, they've both gone into the country for two nights, to his sister, who's ill; but, oh! lassie, if ever Satan stood at a man's right hand, he's been at mine all the way home."

Ned sprang from the bed, and stood upright in the middle of the floor.

"Ratcliffe!" he cried, passionately, "do you mean to say you think God would like to see that child of yours starve rather than have you work an hour or two on Sundays?"

Ratcliffe groaned.

"Are you mad?" he went on. God's forgotten us all, I take it, or He'd never have let it come to this. I've a mind to make away with myself, and go and remind Him that you're in the world at all."

"O Ned, Ned!" cried Cherry, sitting up, with

the tears raining down her cheeks, "don't be so wicked!"

He checked himself for a moment; then continued, more quietly:

"As I told you that night, Cherry, I once loved God, and tried to please Him; but that's over now—over forever. I've done with all that. I'm going to hell as fast as I can go; and it's the only place for me. Look here, Ratcliffe!"—he drew a chair opposite him, and sat down, speaking quietly and deliberately enough now, with a calmness which was terrible—"look here!"—and he pulled up his coat-sleeve and showed his bony arm—"you can show just such another; but that's nothing; we can starve. But look at Cherry; can you bear that? Will you see her waste away day after day, and week after week, and know that she might have been well and hearty and happy if you only go back to-night and clap your hand on the bargain?"

He stopped to let his words do their work. The great veins were swelling out on Ratcliffe's face and throat, and, cold as he was, the drops

were standing on his forehead. It was an awful struggle.

In another moment Cherry was on her feet between them, her tears gone, her voice steady with fixity of purpose.

"Father," she said, putting up her little rough hand against his bowed head, "GOD SAID, 'In it thou shalt do no manner of work;' and He knew all this would come, and yet He didn't alter it. O father, think of Him, think of Jesus! don't think of me. O Ned!"—and she turned full upon him,—“how can you dare to tempt father? I know it's for me; but”—she took his hand in hers, and looked into his eyes, then said, very gently, “Ned, I love Jesus! and I'd rather starve than break His commandments. I know what I'm saying, I know what it means, but I choose it—for Jesus' sake.”

Ned looked at her till he could bear it no longer. The dead soul within him, tied and bound these many years by Satan, sprang into sudden life—no healing, no peace, only an agony of bitter remorse—but it was alive again. God, heaven, hell, Satan, were all realities, no longer

words. He freed himself from the grasp of her hands, started up, and in another moment had left the room, and was out, he knew not whither—anywhere, if he might but rid himself of the torture that rung his soul.

How long he wandered on, he knew not—mile after mile, till he was in the open country, among fields and hedge-rows. At last, almost exhausted, he stopped and leaned against the paling which enclosed a farm-yard. He could not think, but the attitude of rest seemed a relief now. In a few minutes the winnowing-machine beside the barn-door was set in motion. He watched it for some time, soothed by its monotonous whirring, and insensibly there came back visions of another barn-yard, where he had so often lingered to listen to the steady thud of the flails, and see the chaff fly out. He watched it now, driving away in the keen, pitiless east wind, and then, clear and distinct, as if a voice had spoken them, the words rang through his very soul, "*The ungodly are not so ; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*" Oh the world of unutterable woe in those two words—"not so!" Not

what? He almost felt as though his reason had forsaken him, as his startled soul, only too terribly awake now, plunged back, like a frightened horse on the edge of a sudden precipice, from the bottomless gulf towards which they pointed. "*Not so!*" Then what remained? Nothing but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation"—"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord"—"the blackness of darkness forever."

It was getting towards midnight when he found himself in London again, leaning over the low parapet of Waterloo Bridge. It was a very dark night, but down below he could see the black tide sweeping swiftly down to the sea. It had a terrible fascination for him. Hell itself could scarcely be worse than the torment he had undergone throughout the afternoon, which seemed almost an eternity. Cherry, and the little home in Rose Court, seemed far away in the dim distance. Immeasurably farther off was another home and another face, fairer and paler, but among the angels now. Ah! he could never be there—he was only fit company for devils. He

would go to his own place. In another moment it would have been too late; but God remembered the hope upon which that dead girl had rested as she went down to the shining river, "He will bring him back, not to *us*—to *Him*."

A man passing the bridge caught sight of the motionless figure. With an apprehension that evil was at hand, he crossed over, and laid a firm grasp on his shoulder. The two looked at each other.

"Jack!"

"Stephen Hepburn "

IV.

“He also had a brave victory over his enemy. Let Him grant that dwelleth above, that we fare no worse when we come to be tried.”

—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

CHERRY and her father were sitting over the little fire, he busy with his penny paper, and she laboriously tugging her needle in and out of the wonderful construction which was dignified by the title of her “work.” Cherry was trying hard to be a woman now. The winter’s trouble had brought over her a nameless, undefined change. Though the pressure of want had now passed, and her little face was round and rosy again, her unthinking, careless childhood was just touched with the faint dawn of her far-off womanhood. She had begun to feel that she was more than a plaything to her father; and it was this secret consciousness which made her

entreat Mrs. Macdonald to teach her to work. Hour after hour she would sit patiently over her self-imposed task, cheered on by thoughts and hopes of the good time coming, when she should be able to make her father a shirt. There was another subject which would often intrude upon her thoughts, but which she was obliged to banish when she was at needlework, for the hot tears would force their way into her eyes, and even if she could keep them from dropping on her seams, the poor little fingers with which she naturally wiped them away would soon become unfit to hold the needle. From that afternoon, of which she could never think without terror, they had no tidings of Mr. Ned. When he had dashed out of the room, she had thrown her arms around her father's neck, burst into tears on his breast, bewildered and half-frightened by the words which had been drawn from her, almost without her knowledge, by a sudden pressure. Prostrated by starvation and overwrought feeling, Ratcliffe broke down too, and Cherry was roused from her own tears by the terrible sound, which nearly breaks a woman's

heart, of a strong man's sobs. It was a long time before they had thought or leisure for anxiety about Brown; and not till Cherry's usual bed-time was past did they begin to wonder that he had not returned. Ratcliffe clenched his hands when he thought of the man who had tempted him to sell his allegiance to his God, even though it was for his own child's sake; but Cherry's little warm heart would not hear one word against him.

"Father," she said, very solemnly, "Jesus loves him still; don't be angry with him. He didn't make you do it; and oh! he's so miserable. Do go and see if you can't find him. Oh, if he should have gone"—

She stopped; but the unspoken doubt was enough. In another minute Ratcliffe had caught up his cap, and was on his way to the "Rose and Crown." But the figure he sought, yet feared to see, was not among the thronging jostling crowd round the gaudy bar. He carefully scanned the wearers of ragged coats and greasy tawdry finery, and then stepped softly round towards the parlor door.

"Hallo, Mr. Ratcliffe!" cried the stout landlady, espying him from among the frothing glasses which she was dispensing, "it's a long time since we'd the pleasure of seeing you. What can we do for you, sir?" she added, with an ironical sneer.

"Nothing," said Ratcliffe, shortly.

Several, who had heard the landlady's words, turned round from the bar, and as many voices were raised to bid him welcome, or indulge in "chaff" about his long absence and re-appearance. His heart was too sore for any words, and, without heeding them, he took his survey of the inner room. As he turned round again, he faced a steaming tankard of ale, which the landlady held almost to his lips. Ratcliffe little knew how many bets had been laid among his old companions upon the chances of his ultimate return to drink, and was hardly conscious of the expectant pause which fell upon the whole tap-room. The dignity of a great and noble sorrow was upon the rough working-man, which lifted him immeasurably above the jeering crowd among whom he stood. He too had followed

afar-off in the train of the noble army of martyrs, and, though almost broken-hearted, had come off "more than conqueror, through Him that had loved him." He had always been silent and taciturn, and now the strong feelings, which had wrought every nerve up to the highest tension, made him almost mute. Presently he put up his hand, and, with the motion like that of a blind man feeling his way, he gently pushed the tankard aside. "I cannot," he said, not gruffly, but with undoubted decision; and then, as if he saw them not, he walked through the crowd to the door. There was that about him which made them fall back to let him pass; but, as the glass-door swung open to his touch, they recovered from their surprise, and derisive shouts of "teetotaller," "hypocrite," "screw," together with other less choice but more forcible epithets, followed him out into the cold fresh night air. It was nothing to him then. He hardly noticed what would once have been the keenest pain; but with a sinking heart went on in his hopeless quest. From one public-house or gin-palace to another, up and down streets and courts and

alleys, he sought till at last he returned home, hoping that he might find the wanderer already there. But only Cherry was crouching beside the cold grate, and when she saw that he was alone, the look of expectation and welcome gave way to a long, bitter wail.

Day after day the search continued ; and often Ratcliffe would steal fearfully up in the twilight to read the notices on the walls of police stations, the iron hand, which seemed to grasp his heart, only relaxing its pressure as he gathered enough of their contents to assure him that the description of the bodies "found drowned" could not apply to what he sought. He never knew till then how deeply and truly he had loved the wayward, gentle, fierce man, who had so strangely become one of the little household. He never told Cherry of those visits, nor of the anxiety with which he snatched at every newspaper and mercifully the thought was kept from her. "Spare my little lass this," he would often pray, as he stood beside the station-house. And God granted him that which he requested.

It was not immediately either that the tide

of their own fortunes turned. It is verily true, in the sense of recompense as well as of retribution, that "though God does not pay at the end of every week, at the last He pays;" but though, "even now, in this time," they that have loved Him better than son or daughter, "shall receive an hundred-fold," the reward rarely follows immediately upon the sacrifice. There were a few more days of starvation before help came, and then it was through Cherry's friend, Mr. Forrester. Ratcliffe had soon gone to tell the missionary of his anxiety about Ned, and then, as they sat together over the little fire-place, carefully bricked up to save any needless expenditure of fuel, the father had told, with thankful tears, of the grace of God in the little daughter, who now seemed to him almost like an angel. He had too nearly fallen himself before the power of temptation to think anything of his own victory; but when he was gone, carrying with him the help which the good couple forced him to accept "for the Master's sake," Mr. Mackenzie fell down on his knees and blessed God for another star in his Saviour's crown. "I do be-

lieve it's real," he said to his wife, "when a man can starve for his religion. I shall write to Mr. Forrester to-night."

Not a week afterwards Mr. Forrester's earnest exertions had found a permanent situation, at moderate but certain wages, for the man who, under the pressure of the strongest temptation, had "remembered the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." Ratcliffe and Cherry always said it came straight from God.

Matters soon mended then. The things which had been so sorrowfully "put away," were gradually got out of pawn; and before very long, good food and warm clothing gave Cherry back her rosy cheeks and merry voice. But through all this time no tidings had come of Mr. Ned.

This evening, as she sat sewing, the shirt-question predominated in her mind till she was startled by a knock at the door, and sprang up with the quick rush of the hope which every unexpected sound brought. But, to her disappointment, another man stood there, taller and broader, and without the knotted rings of light curling hair.

"Is your name Ratcliffe?" said the pleasant voice.

"Father's is. Mine's Cherry."

"All right," said the man, with a little laugh; "that'll do." And then he stepped forward into the middle of the room to meet her father, who had risen more slowly from his newspaper. To him, unwonted sounds or unfamiliar persons brought more of fear than hope. Stephen Hepburn read the look.

"It's all right," he said; "I've come to bring you news of your friend Brown, and mine too."

"Thank God!" said Ratcliffe, involuntarily; and Cherry gave a leap of joy.

"Yes, thank God," echoed Stephen, reverently. "It has been touch and go with him," he added, taking Cherry on his knee, as he sat down on the chair to which Ratcliffe motioned him. "He has been ill, dangerously ill; but the danger's over now, and I hope, with God's blessing, we may pull him through."

"Oh, when will he come home?" cried Cherry. "I've kept his room ever so clean for him, for no one hasn't taken it yet; and so Mr. Sparks

lets me call it his ; and now he'll find it all ready."

"Not yet awhile, little one," said Hepburn. "It'll be a good time yet till he's fit to move, I'm afraid. But you must come and see him."

"Where is he?" asked her father, gradually finding his tongue through his surprise.

"At my lodgings. I found him," and he lowered his voice, "the very night he left you, I believe, on Waterloo Bridge."

Ratcliffe leant forward with a quick eager glance ; the other understood him.

"Yes, I was only just in time. He was maddened, poor fellow. No, not with drink ; with grief and distress, and I'm afraid want of food. I don't live very far from there, and I got him home ; and until a few days ago, we've had to watch him day and night, with brain fever. It was only late last night I was able to find out where you lived. He had often spoken of you both when he was light-headed : but I was sorely afraid I should never know who you were ; and yet I was sure you loved him dearly."

"We did," said Ratcliffe, heaving a huge sigh

of relief. "I never knew how dearly I loved the poor boy till he was gone; and 'twas strange, too, for we never knew nothing of him till my little Cherry here picked him up in the streets."

Stephen looked down at the little face, which was resting confidently on his shoulder. "I never heard of him for six years," he said, gravely, "till I put my hand on his shoulder that night. God brought us together, I am sure." Then meeting a look of inquiry, he went on: "My name's Stephen Hepburn. We're no relations, only we lived near each other in the country years ago, and we both found Jesus at the same time; and you know," he added, brightening, "there's nothing like that for making friends."

Ratcliffe was not fluent enough to have words handy; but his look was responsive. Stephen went on to give some details of the illness, and then heard with deepest interest all that they could tell him of Jack, though evidently disappointed to find how little it was. The light could only reach back over a few months at best, and all the intervening years were still shrouded in

darkness. Jack had evidently never spoken of his early life, nor given them a hint of his true name; and, with characteristic honor, Stephen forebore to enlighten them. He would wait. If the favorable symptoms lasted, he might hear all; if not, well, God knew, and he must be content to be ignorant. Cherry was wildly anxious to start that very night to see her dear Mr. Ned; but Stephen was firm. He had come to bring them news directly his work was over; but the doctor had said that days must pass before any visitors could be allowed. Excitement might renew all the worst symptoms. "I have hardly spoken to him myself yet," said Stephen; "but depend upon it, Cherry, you shall see him the moment the doctor says he is well enough. You will trust me, won't you?" And Cherry said she would.

Stephen walked sadly home to his lodgings. It was no more than he had expected, that Jack should have been living altogether as one "without God, and having no hope;" but the certainty that it was so, forced upon him with greater distinctness the sense of the difficulty of the

work which God had thus laid before him. He stood some time on the door-step in the quiet street, looking up into the starry sky, and laying the burden upon his dearest Friend. Then he opened the door with his latch-key, went in, and up the narrow stairs to his own room.

"How late you are!" said Jack, fretfully, as he closed the door.

"Yes," answered Stephen; and then, his quick eye catching signs of discomfort, he lifted the tired head on his strong arm, and settled the pillows with no unpractised hand. Many a hospital ward, and many a lonely garret and dim cellar knew Stephen Hepburn's silent ministry.

"There, that's better, isn't it? Yes, I am late. But I couldn't get home sooner. But I've been to see your little Cherry. What a dear child it is!"

"You been *there*!" cried Jack, starting up. "Why, how did you ever know where to find them?"

"You told me. Yes; you don't remember; but you told me last night, just enough for me to find them out with some difficulty."

"But what in the world did you go for?" said Jack, impatiently. "How could you? I didn't want them to find me; I can never face them again." And the pained look came over his face which, in his incoherent ramblings, had always accompanied the mention of "Ratcliffe" or "Cherry." Stephen had known long since that there was some painful mystery connected with his parting from them, and knew too now that he had the remedy in his hands. He shelved the question for the moment.

"I wish you could have seen that little thing's face when I told them I had brought good news of you, and the father's too. Jack, that's a rare man. He just broke out with 'Thank God,' and couldn't say another word."

Stephen spoke slowly, letting the words drop in upon the poor shattered mind; and as he talked on, telling of their love and remembrance, he saw the tears forcing their way from under the shut lids. It was the first sign of tenderness; and when he ceased speaking, there was no reply. Some time afterwards, he came to the bedside with the little meal which closed Jack's day.

"Do you know," said Jack, hoarsely, as he finished, "that the last thing I did for that man who had been a brother to me, was to try and ruin his soul as well as my own?"

"They never told me so. If you did, it's all forgiven and forgotten. And don't you fear you succeeded; the man loves Jesus still, if ever any one did, I'm pretty sure, for all he's so quiet."

"Didn't they tell you of it?"

"No. But, Jack, I can't let you talk to-night."

"But there's so much I want to ask. I must talk. I want to know about them all at home."

It was the moment Stephen had dreaded—the first recurrence to the old by-gone days, now so sadly changed. When he first returned to consciousness, Jack's memory was so clouded that he seemed to find nothing strange in his surroundings. He spoke to Stephen as if the six years were a dream, and nothing more natural than that they should be together. Then he had come to the consciousness of the last few months, and now in one moment he seemed to have realized all that lay far behind, or some-

thing of it—how much, Stephen could not tell. During the long hours in which he had listened to wild and troubled ravings, there had come to his ears—mingled with the names of Ratcliffe and Cherry, and other words so technical in their application as to give him the clue to at least some part of the hidden history—the old familiar names and expressions, which, when reason returned, seemed for a time to be blotted out. Only once had there been any direct reference to that for which Stephen listened most eagerly. He had been lying unwontedly still one night, when Hepburn was startled by hearing him begin Christie's hymn. Almost the old look passed over the worn sin-stained face as he repeated: "My blessed Saviour," with a restful dwelling upon each word, which thrilled Stephen's heart with a new hope; but before he had reached the third line, he stumbled, and passed again into incoherent mutterings. Now the old memories had come again; but it would never do to get upon such subjects at that hour.

"I'm master here, Jack," he said, pleasantly, "and not one word more do you speak to-night.

Now, I'm going to read ;" and he took up his Bible. There was a moment's unwillingness, and then the enfeebled will yielded to the strong one, and Stephen read softly through the Psalms for the evening. Night and morning, without apology or comment, he had read aloud, in a voice which, without commanding attention from a wearied mind, was distinct enough if Jack chose to listen. When he stopped reading, he was relieved to find that the usual result had followed, and Jack was asleep.

V.

“Then let wrath remove,
Love shall do the deed,
For with love
Stony hearts will bleed.”

—GEORGE HERBERT.

“Thou hast gained thy brother.”

THE next evening they were together again. The doctor's visit had been finished just as Stephen reached home for the few minutes which he always managed now during the dinner-time; and as they met at the foot of the stairs, he gave Stephen the most favorable report he had yet been able to make. Stephen drew him into the little parlor, and asked his advice about the difficulty which was now weighing upon him.

“Well,” said the doctor, in his quick Irish way, “keep him from talking if you can; but if

you can't, let it come out. If the mind's once aroused again, suspense may be worse than excitement. But you must use your discretion ; and you've enough and to spare of it. I only wish the troublesome fellow would get well," he added, as he hurried out. "He takes a great deal too much of your time, Hepburn, and we want you at the hospital badly. Good-day!" And the lively Irishman was off.

The long low room looked very bright to-night. The lamp, carefully shaded away from the bed, cast a cheerful glow everywhere else. There were maps and texts, and one or two good engravings on the walls. Stores of books in the rough shelves, and no lack of signs that it served for study as well as for sleeping-room. Stephen was sitting at the table, poring over a huge Encyclopædia, plans and books spread out on the floor, and his ready pencil jotting down notes on a long slip of paper, fixed under a letter-weight at his elbow. He was intently occupied, but a sigh from the bed brought him down to everyday life. He looked up. Jack's eyes were fixed on him

with a wistful gaze, which made him drop books and papers and come to his side.

“What is it, Jack?”

“I’ve just wasted my life, Stephen,” he said, bitterly. “I can’t do much more than read and write and sum a bit, and look at you. I can put two and two together, and I know what your books and pictures and everything mean. You’re getting on; and I’m sinking down, lower and lower.”

“‘When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, ‘There is lifting up,’” said Stephen, cheerily. “Jack, old fellow, I can’t have you getting down-hearted. You know when I was a boy I had chances that very few get. I was always about with our minister’s son, and, lazy lad that he was, he’d never learn without I was with him; and our parson taught me more than he did his own son, or I’m mistaken. But there’s many another working-man as well off as I am; and I think God has only brought you down to lift you up into something better than you were before.”

Stephen did not tell him that, as foreman of extensive works in the south of London, he had

been, for two or three years, in receipt of wages which gave him an income larger than that of many a gentleman. But still he lived on as simply as ever in the lodgings which he had taken when he first came to town, allowing himself no luxury but books, and giving all else to the Lord. He was a solitary man, strict almost to a fault in business matters, but with a heart as tender as a woman's for his men when he met them unofficially—having a good many Christian friends with whom he toiled to relieve the misery and sin around them, and rich in the love of many grateful hearts ; yet without one companion who had ever been admitted to his inmost confidence. He had “strengthened many weak hands, and his words had upholden many that were falling,” but his relations with others were rather those of giving than of receiving. They leaned on him, as on a tower of strength, whilst he never seemed to ask for their help, so far as his own inner feelings were concerned. The language of his whole life seemed to be, “*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.*”

“Are you busy?” asked Jack.

"Never, old boy, if I can do anything for you."

"I must know sooner or later," he said, wearily, "though I dread knowing; but I'd rather be sure one way or the other. Tell me about Christie. Is she?"—

"Yes," answered Stephen, steadily; "God took her. She's had six years of it in heaven now." There was a sort of triumph in his voice.

"Did she know—about me?"

"Yes; they heard of it two or three days before she died. Mrs. Chase wrote. But, Jack, don't fear that it made her worse; she was too near heaven, I think. She kept saying to the very end that God would bring you back."

Jack clenched teeth and hands.

"You won't let her be disappointed?" Stephen went on. "Think how many are looking for you there, and the Lord Jesus most of all."

"Don't talk to me about that, Hepburn; I can't stand it. That's all over forever. Tell me about aunt."

"She didn't live very long after her—only five or six months, and the old man died the same

week. They were buried together, just under the chancel window."

"And Tom?"

"Tom's got the farm now. I was down last harvest-time for a bit; and you wouldn't know him. He's married Nelly Brown, Mrs. Hopper's niece. Do you remember her? Well; she's freshened him up wonderfully; and there's three children, two of them toddling about. It looks strange in the old place; but I don't think there's a stick or a stone altered that could be helped. Then they've got Debby living with them. She's not up to much work, but I don't suppose Tom would ever let her go. Upon my word, that fellow's fond of her. You see she's all that's left of the old times."

"There was a long pause, broken only by the ticking of the little Swiss clock which hung upon the wall, and the muffled roar of the great city without. In the slow moments Jack felt as if he tasted the very bitterness of death—not the mere pang of the severance of soul and body, but what seemed to him the first hot drops of the cup of the everlasting torment of the second

death. As Stephen had spoken, the old buried past had been raised again instinct with life; and sad though the recital might have seemed to other ears, to him it only brought the keen sense of their happiness—safe forever in the bosom of an ineffable peace which he could never share. It was as if he stood outside the closed doors of the Father's house, "hearing music and dancing," but with the *refrain* of a single phrase beating in slow strokes his own eternal death-knell—"And ye yourselves shut out." Stephen did not disturb him. His own thoughts were busy as when one opens a book long since closed forever. All the wealth of the tenderness of that rich nature seemed welling up for the broken sin-stricken man beside him; but the touch had not come yet which was to unseal the spring, and knit them together in a strange brotherhood of love and grief. Jack had heard all he had had to tell with a quietness which showed only too well how his natural impetuosity was toned down, not, alas! into softness, but into the sternness of self-repression. He never moved during the lengthened silence, but there was neither sleep nor

repose in the open eyes. At last he spoke again, very huskily.

"Tell me more about Christie—how she died."

Stephen turned round.

"It was just as lovely as her whole life had been. I hadn't seen her for weeks; but the last evening, about five o'clock, Tom came down for me. She was wearying to remember some verses I had repeated up there ever so long before. I went up with him, and found them all there. After I had said them, she just thanked me, and bid us all good-by. I never thought any one could have spoken so clearly near so death. Then she turned away from us all and spoke to—to Him. The very last thing she said was that verse, 'His name shall be on their foreheads.' We put it on her gravestone. We fancied from what she said that she had that night in her mind when Captain Staunton spoke about the third commandment—you remember? We hardly knew when she went. I don't think it was three minutes after she had spoken. We were all standing quite still by her."

He spoke steadily, but in short sentences, and with evident difficulty.

"My little Christie!" murmured Jack, in the old round voice, only mellowed by feeling. Then, with a sudden energy, "Stephen, you don't know I loved her. I never really knew it till we went away to Torquay. You know we'd been together all our lives till I went to Mallenden; and it was the one thing between Tom and me, which she liked best; but I think it was mostly me, though sometimes she'd make me think the other way, just to rile me. It was about the time when—when—when the captain came home, that I began to know what she really was to me. I don't mean to say she was the only girl I'd ever fancied; but there was some nonsense about me and one of the laundry-maids just then, which made me see she was the only one I could ever think of asking to be my wife. And yet, somehow, whenever I went over, she was that innocent-like that I was quite daunted from saying anything to her; and then there was always the other thing to talk about. I suppose too I was too much like her brother

for her ever to think of me. I never could be sure if she really cared for me or not."

"I think she did," said Stephen, quietly.

"You! why, what made you think it?"

"I could hardly tell you—little things that perhaps no one else noticed—more manner than anything else. She was just self-conscious a little bit when you were there; and I've seen her eyes go after you with that long look in them. I don't think she knew it herself, or anyhow wouldn't allow it to herself; but I've not much doubt of it."

Jack lay still, pondering. Then with a sudden motion, he exclaimed, "That cursed Newton! I'd seen her getting paler and thinner, though they never seemed to notice it, all the last times I'd been over; and when we was ordered off so sudden to Torquay, I'd a'most screwed myself up to saying something to her when I went to say good-by; and then that"—He paused. No epithet which he would like to meet Stephen's ears seemed strong enough to measure the intensity of his wrath. "He had always hated me, ever since I had been going on different;

and he just managed things to prevent my going over ; and I never said good-by to any one, or saw her again. Oh, how different things might have been !”

“ You could not have kept her,” said Stephen, sadly.

“ No ; but we might have known we loved each other, and that might have kept me. Stephen, I’d begun to go back a little, even then, just a little, and what with the move and all, I got worse, and then when the captain went to Scotland”— He paused again. “ It seems so odd that the very thing which would have lost me little Cherry, if it hadn’t been for you, was the thing upon which I first went wrong, outwardly wrong I mean, and that was keeping Sunday ; and after that it was all down-hill till the smash came. Stephen, it was as if the devil had got hold of me that day ; and I doubt if he’s ever let me go since. You don’t know perhaps what it was to hear the master swear ; but I swore every bit as bad as he. I don’t know what I said. I was mad with him and myself, and maddest of all with Newton. Did Mr. Chase tell you how it was ?”

"Yes."

"I could take my oath, Hepburn, that the mischief was none of my doing." And he went into some technical details, to which Stephen listened with great attention, drawing out all particulars by skilful questioning.

"My poor boy," he said, at last, "you have been hardly dealt by. But, oh! Jack, how could you keep away as you did? I think it nearly broke your aunt's heart. You know she loved you pretty much the same as if you'd been one of her own; and it cut her to the heart that you should have dishonored Christ. To the very last, she hoped she'd see you before she died. I think there's scarce a paper we didn't advertise in."

"Yes, I know it," said Jack, turning his head away. "I've seen them, Stephen—scores of times."

"And not come home!" There was a touch of scorn in the voice.

"I took a solemn oath," said Jack, with some difficulty, "that I'd never face any one of you again; but oh! Hepburn, I suffered enough for

it. Sometimes I'd be sitting in a public-house, and I'd take up the paper without thinking, and there it'd be, till I've drunk myself almost mad to drown the thought. Do you know what I did after I went off?" he asked, with a sudden change of voice. "I enlisted!"

"Yes," answered Hepburn; "I guessed as much from all you said when you were ill."

"Did I say much? Do you know how—how I come to be here?"

"No; what do you mean?"

There was no other human creature near; but Jack raised himself on his elbow, and looked cautiously round the room. Then laying his hand on Stephen's arm, and looking him full in the face, he said shortly: "I'm a deserter."

"Jack!"

There was silence. The tired man fell back on his pillow, and Hepburn sat meditatively beside him. "I might have known that too," he said, presently, "if I'd only put two and two together. I wonder I didn't. Of course, your time couldn't have been up by now. But what ever made you do it?"

"It's a queer story," said Jack, raising himself a little. "If you saw it in a book, you'd never believe it. I'd been tramping about the country for two or three days after I left Torquay, I suppose, but I am not sure, for I rushed straight to drink before I was out of the town, and I haven't been in my sober senses for five minutes since, I expect. Well, I got into a regular drinking row one night in Exeter. I don't remember much about it, and nothing about my doing the deed; but when I came to my senses in the morning I found myself enlisted. And what do you think in?"

Stephen shook his head.

"In our own captain's regiment. I was mad. First, I hoped the doctor wouldn't pass me; but there was no fear of that. I was sound as a trivet; so that was no good, and I was in for it. I didn't mind it at all in itself; the horses, and all that, was just in my line, and the life, and the hope of sometime getting into something stirring, was what I liked; but it was the fear of meeting *him*. After a while, I found that I shouldn't have to join the regiment abroad, but

stop a bit at the depot ; and so long as we was at Canterbury, I was all right. Not what you'd call all right, Stephen. I think I lived the fastest life of any man in garrison, though I managed to keep out of trouble ; but I mean I'd no fear of seeing him, and I knew none of you could find me. Of course, I wasn't in my own name. I've had two or three since you saw me," he added, with a short laugh.

"Well?"

"Well, it was when the order came for us to go out, I vowed I'd never set foot in India, and I tried every dodge under heaven ; but it was all no go. The facts were against me ; and the end of it was, I deserted."

"How long ago was that?"

"Better than four years. I've been pretty nearly everything you can think of since. In the theatrical line ; and working, and idling, and starving by turns. Then the beginning of this winter things had got to a pass, and I was selling play-bills when I found Cherry ; and you know the rest."

It was a grievous tale, and Jack now made

but little attempt to hide his misery. Being once fairly launched on his story, it seemed an unspeakable relief to have it all out, and to see that there was no shrinking from him, no attempt at what he would have called "preaching," only the gravest, most understanding sympathy. "I could never tell you what I've endured, Stephen. Many's the day, ay, and the week too, that I've walked about with an ounce of laudanum in my pocket; and I don't know why I didn't take it. I don't know what I kept alive for now. I owe it all to you, Hepburn; and yet I can't feel grateful to you for it—though I can't be off loving you, lad. But I'll never be any good to myself or any one else; I'm lost, sure enough now. But O, Hepburn, Hepburn, I did love Him once. I never was a hypocrite. I did love Him really then!"

Stephen could hardly command his voice; there was something so touchingly childlike in the words and the appealing look in the eye, which sought his face.

"Jack," he said, "I know you loved Him; but haven't you forgotten the other side? If we love

Him, it's because He first loved us; and you know he doesn't change as we do. He is the same to-day as He was yesterday."

He added no more, but left the words to find their quiet way into the troubled heart, and went down to speak to his landlady about Jack's supper. When he came back again, some minutes later, he found it was past the time for his medicine. To his joy he saw, as he stood beside the bed, that there was a more natural look on the white face than he had yet seen there. The doctor had been right; suspense and the gnawing of a burdened conscience had been worse than excitement; perhaps even that had only served to rouse him from the heavy stupor in which his illness had left him. He opened his eyes, and half smiled as he watched Stephen carefully measuring the liquid into a spoon. It must have been some curious conjunction of ideas which made him say :

"Stephen, I wonder you never fell in love with Christie."

Little as he guessed it when he spoke the words, they were a home-thrust which stung to

the very quick. The man's self-command was wonderful. Not a drop fell from the spoon as he slipped his other arm under Jack's pillow, and held it to his lips. Then he replaced it on the table, and without moving himself, said simply, "I did."

He could feel the sharp thrill of surprise through Jack's whole frame as he leant against him, and just shifted his position a little, till he was sitting on the bed, with Jack almost in his arms. It was the first time that any ear but his God's had heard the secret of his life, which had made him the lonely man he was. Why he spoke it now he hardly knew—he knew five minutes afterwards.

"Yes," he went on, speaking deliberately and solemnly out of the depths of his softened heart, "I loved her. I don't think man ever loved woman better.' She was more than my own life to me." He took his little Testament—the one Captain Staunton had given him—from his pocket, and opened it almost at the end, holding it before Jack, so that he could see that a tiny snow-drop, faded now into a dull yellow, was

gummed beside the verse: "His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads."

"I took that out of her dead hand. Just before Tom fetched me, he brought her in two of them. They were the first that winter. They were in her hand when she died. The other was buried there. I asked her mother if I might have this. I half think she guessed then; but we never spoke of it, though I believe I was like a son in the house afterwards till they died."

"Did Christie know it?" asked Jack, in a voice which showed how great his surprise had been.

"Never, oh, never! Jack, old fellow, could you think *that* of me, when I knew how it was with you, and with her too? I don't think I was in the house above three times after I was sure how things really were."

Jack made a sudden movement. The stony heart, which had so long been dead to all heavenly love, was broken at last by this noble earthly love. Like a child to its mother, he turned round and hid his face on Stephen's

breast, while he shook with the strangling sobs. Even Hepburn's strong nerve almost gave way, and tears, such as no one had ever seen him shed since that night long ago after the only outward fall of his Christian life, dropped fast down on Jack's head. It was a long time before either of them spoke. Then he said, tenderly :

"Jack, we must be brothers now. We're both alone in the world."

"Help me to find Jesus again," was the only answer. But Stephen could have asked no other. It gave him all he wanted. The defiant wretchedness was gone ; the wanderer had "come to himself."

At that moment Miss Lane knocked at the door. Stephen laid the pillows comfortably under him, and then taking the little tray from her hand, fed him with the utmost care. The return to the small attentions of daily life was an unspeakable relief to both, and his whole heart went up in a glad *Te Deum*, as Jack's eye met his with the old easy look of confidence, and a yet deeper look of love. When he had settled down for the night, and prayed beside the bed, he

stood for a moment irresolute. Then, strong man as he was, he stooped down from his great height, and kissed his forehead ; and through all the hours of the wakeful night, one song rang in his heart, "This my brother was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found."

VI.

“Even me !”

IT was a grand event to Cherry when, two or three evenings afterwards, Stephen came to fetch her and her father to see “Mr. Ned,” as she still persisted in calling him. As they went along, Ratcliffe heard with grave interest something of the life which had hitherto been a mystery to him.

“You’d best tell him, Stephen,” Jack had said. “I don’t feel as if I could talk about it again; but I’d like him to know. I owe it to him, for he was a true friend to me when I’d not another in the world. Besides, I must have my old name again now.”

But Cherry was quite unable to see any necessity for a change in her ordinary mode of address; and when the door was opened which

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ushered her into the strange-room, and she found a relief from her shyness by a spring at the only familiar thing it contained, it was with a cry of "O Mr. Ned, Mr. Ned!" that she covered his face with kisses.

"You little puss!" said Jack, more affected than he was willing to show. The child made a welcome shield for what might otherwise have been a painful meeting, and a long silent grasp of the hand was enough to ask and seal forgiveness for all that had passed. She was petted and made much of by the two elderly Miss Lanes, to whom the visit of a child was a rare treat; shown whatever Stephen could muster in the way of pictures; and finally attained to the crowning glory of pouring tea out of the bright metal teapot. When they were going away, she returned to the question, a direct answer to which had hitherto been evaded.

"When are you coming home, Mr. Ned? You know I told you I'd keep your room ever so lovely."

"I don't know that I shall let him go, now I've

got him, Cherry," said Stephen, lightly, as the other paused for an answer.

It was a grave one when it came. He took hold of the little restless hands as he spoke.

"Cherry, do you know what one ought to do when he makes a promise?"

"Why, keep it," said Cherry, opening her eyes.

"Do you know that, long before you knew me, I made a promise that I'd serve the Queen—be a soldier, you know, Cherry—for a certain number of years; and I broke it, and ran away. What do you think I ought to do?"

She stood irresolute.

"I'd like to live on here in London with you and Stephen and your father, but I must pay off my promise first. Don't you think I ought to?"

"Will it be long?" asked Cherry, before committing herself.

"A good many years."

"Oh, it's too bad!" cried the child; "and I thought we'd all be together, and be so happy again. Why, Mrs. Mac's husband's a soldier,

and he never comes home. O dear! O dear! it's too bad."

Stephen came to the rescue—to say the words which Jack could not yet say for himself.

"Cherry, which do you think would please God best?"

She looked at him for a minute, and then, as the tears came, put her hands over her eyes, and ran out of the room. Ratcliffe followed, and the two were left alone. They said nothing, but Stephen knew then that his hopes for Jack were built upon a good foundation. There was not much encouragement, had he looked only on the outward appearance of things, excepting in the softened face and manner. After the one outburst of confidence and love, Jack had sunk into an almost habitual silence upon anything but surface subjects. He made no reference to the past, beyond asking Hepburn, the night that Cherry had been with them, whether he didn't think she was like Christie, or, at all events, if she didn't remind him of her? Stephen could not see it; but Jack was not at all shaken in his belief, and told how it had struck him the first

time he ever saw the little thing, and how the same likeness, lost in daily familiarity, had haunted him through that awful afternoon, and had stood out with terrible distinctness just before Hepburn had grappled with him on the bridge. As regarded the one point for which Stephen cared beyond any other, he was almost silent, and very despairing. He would sometimes sit for hours together with the Bible open before him, but seemed utterly unable to lay hold of the promises of God. "I know it," he would say, as Stephen pointed out to him one blessed truth after another, "but I can't feel it." And he shrank with morbid sensitiveness from admitting any visitor.

"Old fellow," he would answer, when Stephen pressed him to see his clergyman, or Mr. Mackenzie, with whom he had made acquaintance through Ratcliffe, "you're as good, and better, to me, than any one else; and I couldn't stand it. I've not been used to these things. No one can do me any good; I'm past it all now."

Sometimes there were days of great distress, which he vainly strove to hide; and in the irri-

tation, which was but the natural result of physical weakness, he would persist in seeing the signs of unconquerable sin, and bitterly accuse himself of an utter want of earnestness or sincerity in seeking God. It was a long, long work ; and a heart less hopeful, and an experience less varied than Stephen's, might have been almost in despair. But he had seen far too much of the real actual dealings of a merciful Saviour with sin-sick souls to be trammelled by other people's opinions ; he had learned too that one of the characteristics of Christ-like love is, that it "hopeth all things." And so he hoped, and quietly waited.

All this time Jack was fast regaining his strength. Better air and food than he had had for long came to the help of his strong constitution, and he mended rapidly. He and Stephen had one fierce battle over the subject of his living "a burden," as he said, upon the latter ; but at last he took, what even the peculiar tie between them could hardly make other than humiliation, as a part of the results of his sin. He must submit to his present lot, that he might the sooner

be fit to go back to the service which he had dishonored. They were speaking of his departure one Saturday afternoon, when Jack's increasing strength seemed to warn them that the time of parting was drawing near.

"I believe I might go in a day or two," he said ; "but, oh ! if I might have but one thing first. No ; I must wait a little." The voice told well enough what that one thing was.

"I hope to-morrow won't be our last Sunday," Stephen said, presently. "It would be too hard, as I've promised to go and take Short's work for him ; but it's the Lord's work," he added, checking himself. "I shouldn't say that ; only I hope it won't be. I wish we could have gone together."

"But that was impossible. The long walk down to Greenwich and back, which Stephen must take to supply the place of a sick friend who, besides superintending a Sunday-school had a large Bible class of young men, was beyond Jack's powers ; and nothing would have induced him now to go in any sort of conveyance on Sunday. He spent the day with his friends

in Rose Court, returning home rather earlier than usual. He was in a very thoughtful mood to-night, and wandered on through one street after another, without taking particular heed to his movements, farther than that they were in the general direction of home. The long cry after the living God was very strong now. He was beginning to believe at last that there might be mercy even for him ; but he wanted to grasp it. All the past had come back to him now, and he could even bear to look at it ; but the very remembrance of the old joy and rest in a loving Friend and Saviour prevented his being contented with anything less. It was not so much to-night the longing for pardon, as the cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find *Him* !"

His absent mind was brought down to present things by the sight of large bills on the doors of a theatre on the opposite side of the street. He looked up, and saw advertisements of the service which was going on at the time within those very doors. It was getting on into the spring now—the welcome, tardy spring after that bitter winter ; but though almost all the theatre

services were over, this one had been kept open by private liberality. It was the last service even here; and Jack unhesitatingly crossed the street and went in. The building was well filled—not, indeed, the dense crowd which he had been accustomed to see at a week-night performance, but a large enough mass to give to the hot, stale atmosphere the unsavory flavor with which he was familiar enough, and which met him as he pushed open the door. A quiet-looking man, sitting near, pointed him to a seat, and supplied him with a fly-leaf of the simple popular hymns in use. Jack had been to church ever since he had been strong enough, but somehow he had never yet felt himself so much at home as he now did in the familiar pit. There was something about the stiff London church which oppressed him. If he had been a worshipper in the little old church at Mallenden, or even among his old comrades in the garrison chapel, he fancied he would have got on well enough; but he was not yet sufficiently accustomed to a town service to feel at his ease. Here he found himself quite at home and “nat-

ural-like," though the stage had for its unwonted occupant a white-haired man, in the dress of a clergyman. For the first five minutes Jack was chiefly occupied in observing his surroundings, and could not but be struck with the evident interest and decorum. Men, in their shirt-sleeves and ragged coats, bonnetless women, and rough, tawdrily-dressed girls were listening with fixed attention; and, easy as were some of the attitudes, there was no sign of the fatal drowsiness which sometimes descends on congregations in a more elevated sphere of life. It was a wonderful sight—people whose shadows would never have darkened the doors of church or chapel here sat, as on their own ground, "hearing words whereby they might be saved." Irreverent or even revolting as the circumstantial might have seemed to the refined, to Jack and those like him there was nothing more satisfactory and natural than to listen in a place to which they were accustomed, whose seats and ways they knew, and where their presence was not supposed to imply any claim to an advanced degree of sanctity. It did strike him for a

moment, as his eye fell on the decorations of the stage, that it was a queer sort of pulpit; but the thought passed almost as soon as it had taken form. May it not be that the very sensibility to external influences upon which we pride ourselves, is in some respects a doubtful heritage, whose absence is supplied by compensating advantages? Truly it needs an enlightened wisdom to guard our very aids to devotion from becoming the grave-clothes of a worship which is to be a spiritual as well as a truthful one; whilst, on the other hand, the man whose position is such that, if he have any religion at all, it must be the simplest, barest reality, is in no wise helped or hindered by the more dangerously refined appeals to the senses, but cares not in what form the word is brought to him, if only he may grasp the spiritual truth which may save his soul alive.

“They’ve hit the right nail on the head, at all events,” was Jack’s verdict, as he settled himself to listen, arrested at last by a word which drew him with a strange, sad attraction—“Backslider.” It was a closing appeal to those like

himself to return to the Lord their God ; and the homely words won a way to his heart. There was a directness about this preaching which he liked and could understand ; and when, at the close, an invitation was given to all who wished to remain for a prayer-meeting, he found himself, half to his own surprise, among the little company in the green-room. The proceedings were quiet and very orderly. After a few words from the old minister, spoken with special distinctness to those who desired to find peace with God, he called for prayer, and without more than a minute's pause between each, five or six were offered in succession. The speakers may have been very uneducated, and the language a wide contrast to the calm, holy dignity of our authorized forms of prayer ; but then those were the utterances of ripened saints of God, and these only the cries of the little children, who, as yet, knew scarcely more than that their sins were forgiven them for His Name's sake. Here and there, amidst tautology, or even incautious expressions, the beautiful thoughts which the Spirit of God teaches would start forth in strong

and living words ; and there was a reality about the whole thing which went to Jack's heart. He knew well enough that it was because he was such a poor, ignorant, stumbling soul that he could not enter as he would into the services which Stephen loved so dearly ; but still, thank God, here was something which would just do for him, and such as he. His heart was very full and softened when, before rising from their knees, the benediction, which had never seemed so sweet before, was given ; and he was in no hurry to leave when the little stir of parting began, and those present broke up into groups, talking in low, serious voices. Presently two young men, who had been acting as stewards, struck up at the farther end of the room that hymn—that blessed hymn—beginning :

“Lord, I hear of showers of blessing.”

Another beside Jack took it up with a good strong voice ; and seeing that he was unacquainted with the words, touched his elbow, and handed him an open hymn-book. One after another joined in, and the *refrain* of the soft,

waving tune carried the words into his very soul. "It was them two little words, 'even me,' that did it," he said to Stephen afterwards. The Lord who stood in the midst of those "two or three," did not turn away that prayer, nor His mercy from him. As really as in that upper room, eighteen centuries ago, Jesus said to him, "Peace be unto thee, and showed him His hands and His side." What wonder that he, too, like those first disciples, "was glad when he saw the Lord!"

Though he had never seen one of the faces around him before, it was with an absolutely brotherly grasp that he took part in the general hand-shaking with which the group broke up. He was "a child at home" now, and "all these were brethren." As his hand met that of the old minister, who until a moment before had been speaking to some one near the door, he could not resist a hearty "Thank you, sir. God bless you." His hand was detained, with a kindly question.

"Yes, sir; I have found my Saviour again to-night, after six years." He could say no more.

"God be praised!" said the old man, laying his hand on his shoulder. Jack sat down where he was, and covered his face with his hands. It was almost more than he could bear, but he never forgot the wise, kind words which followed, nor the prayer; for the warm hearts must needs give thanks together for another brother "alive again from the dead."

"I hope we may meet again," said the minister, as they separated.

"I'm afraid not, sir. I shall leave London the first thing to-morrow. I was only waiting for this, though I didn't hope it was so near. But you'll remember to pray for me, sir?"

"I will. The Lord preserve you unto His everlasting kingdom," was the solemn answer. And so they parted.

Stephen was sitting over his Bible, and beginning to wonder what could make Jack so late, when he heard his footstep on the stair, and, almost before the door was opened, knew from its lightness that the burden must be gone. He turned round to meet him, and had just risen to

his feet, when Jack came quickly in, and laid his hands on his shoulders. Their eyes met.

"At last, old fellow?"

"Yes, thank God! I hardly know how I got home, Stephen; I was just burning for you to know. God bless you; you've been more than a brother to me!"

He was a good deal shaken and exhausted by excitement; and Stephen insisted on his sitting down at the table, which was ready for supper. But in a moment he started up again.

"Hepburn, I must go to-morrow. I daren't wait longer. I'll just go round there the first thing, and say good-by before he's off to work, and then down to Canterbury. Don't make it too hard for me," he added, earnestly, as he saw the look on Stephen's face. "I dare not wait. I made a sort of covenant with the Lord that I'd go back and face everything, the night we talked together, but somehow I couldn't go till I found my Saviour again; and now I feel bound in honor not to lose an hour I can help."

Stephen Hepburn was the last to hold any man back where duty and honor called.

"I'd not keep you for the world, lad," he said.
"God's will be done."

Long into the night the two sat together, talking over past joys and sins and sorrows, and future hopes. All the deeper things were put away when the parting came next morning. The very treasure of each heart had been stored away in the other, and sealed with the seal of prayer; and it might have been any other breakfast, but for the rare outspoken tenderness which the shadow of the coming parting gave to every common word and act. They knelt down together for a few minutes. Then Jack went out, with Stephen's cheery words still ringing in his ears, whilst he sat still in his lonely room, feeling that he had lost the dearest thing he had on earth.

Then he roused himself, and went out to his work.

VII.

'Perverse and foolish oft I stray'd,
But yet in love He sought me ;
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me."

IT was a hot Indian night. A group of officers, gathered in the verandah outside the mess-room doors, where, lounging in their easy cane-bottomed chairs, the more philosophical among them assuring the grumblers that it was really nearly as cool as a summer-night at home. Captain Staunton was leaning against one of the pillars, only detained by a somewhat prolix friend from going home. It was guest-night; the regiment had been receiving some distinguished visitors; and, as in duty bound, Captain Staunton had been present. Now he was only longing to get away; but whilst he was still lingering, a

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soldier came along the verandah, and stood waiting.

"Ah! there's that fellow back again," said the colonel presently, catching sight of him. "One of your saints, Staunton! Bother take the man! coming back in this hurry. I sent him over to Smith to ask a question, and thought I should be quit of that miserable business till the morning; and now, if he's got the answer, I shall have to be at it again to-night. He must have ridden hard."

Captain Staunton had been in the act of moving away when the idle taunt was flung at him. Now he stood still. The regiment "believed in him" at last; and it was but rarely now that his religion was the subject of jest. For that very reason, though never courting opposition, he was the more anxious not to appear to shrink from any cross which might be brought upon him by his fearless, quiet confession of Christ. So he would not hurry away now.

"A good-looking fellow," remarked one of the officers, carelessly.

"Thereby hangs a tale," said the adjutant,

lighting a fresh cigar, as the colonel slowly raised himself, and sauntered off. "Do you remember the man, Parker, when we were at the depot together?"

"Not I."

"I do," resumed the other. Ford, his name was then, and I always liked the fellow; perhaps all the more because, though I knew he was a scamp, he always had skill enough to keep out of trouble. Never knew him for anything, till one fine day he deserted."

"Ah, I think I have some remembrance," said Captain Parker. "And this is the same man."

"The very same. He came out some time since with a draft, but went at once on detachment, and has only been in again this day or two. Bruce wrote me word how he'd come back to Canterbury some months before, with the old story of beginning a new life. And I believe he's kept to it, too," added the adjutant, frankly. "There's not a smarter soldier in the regiment, I hear."

As Captain Staunton passed down the verandah, the man raised his hand for the customary

salute ; and the very sight of a fellow-Christian was a pleasant finish to the uncongenial evening. He quickened his pace as he neared home, and ran up the steps to the broad verandah, where his young wife was awaiting him.

“I think on the whole I didn’t do amiss in marrying you, Allie,” he said, fondly.

“I’m glad to hear it,” answered the wife, demurely. “To what may I be indebted for the favor of this honorable mention?”

“The weariness of that mess! It makes a man realize the bliss of his ain fireside.”

“My dear Harry, what an unhappy allusion!” laughed Mrs Staunton. “I hope you don’t intend to kindle one forthwith. You’re in good spirits to-night.”

“I am—at getting home to you. How is the infant prodigy?” And the two went in and stood together beside the small cot. The nineteen-year-old mother felt the tiny feet, and smoothed the pillow, and tucked in the mosquito net with a little, pretty, matronly air, which went to her husband’s heart. As they turned away, he said :

"Good news for you, Allie; and, now I think of it, it was that which put me into good spirits to-night. A man has just come in from detachment who will be one of us, and a bright one too, I hope. I do thank God for it. We have missed Black and Macdonald sorely."

"I suppose you've not heard anything more of them?"

"Some one or other was saying this evening that his wife had heard from Mrs. Fitzgerald, that they were still kept at Calcutta for some more invalids and time-expired men, but they really expected to be off the day after she wrote."

"I'm glad of that. But about this new man? Have you seen him?"

"Merely to look at—he was on duty, or semi-duty; so of course it was no more. I expect we shall see him at the prayer-meeting to-morrow, if he is what they say. Trench was telling some story about his having deserted years ago, and coming back—as far as I could make out from his indistinct way of putting things—because he had been converted. Allie.

if it is so, how one glories in such 'peaceable fruits of righteousness!' "

Yes, he was at the little meeting next evening; and each time his eye fell on him, Captain Staunton felt the strange whiff of old days, which a half-recognized sight or sound or scent will bring back. Without knowing why, it made him feel, somewhere or other in his consciousness, the same as he had felt some long-ago time, when or where he could not remember. He singled him out when they were dispersing.

"Yours is a new face among us, I think," he said, with the frank courtesy which he showed to every one alike.

"Not quite to you, sir," answered the man, a little huskily. "I don't think you'd remember me, sir; but I owe my soul to you."

Captain Staunton looked keenly at him. The moustache and uniform had made a great change; but could it be that God had answered the long prayer of more than seven years, and given him back the spiritual child whom he had never forgotten!

"Jack?" he said, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," he answered, turning away to hide his emotion. But the hand was caught in the firm grasp which forgot all difference of earthly rank for the time, and remembered only that they were sons of the same father, and fellow heirs in one household of faith.

"My poor fellow," he said, warmly. "How I have prayed for you! I think pretty nearly every day since I heard you were gone."

"God bless you, sir. It must have been them prayers brought me back, and Stephen's."

The corporal in charge of the room was waiting to lock up, and they went out into the night, glittering with its myriad stars; and there, under their quiet light, Jack told his true friend the long story of sin and restoration—a full frank confession, which seemed to take the last weight from his heart.

"It was all I wanted, sir," he said, as he was going away, "just to set my mind at ease to start clear to my work. Now I feel I've just got one thing set up before me till my time's up, and

that's to do my duty. Sometimes I think, if that time ever comes, I shall find myself back in Rose Court, and ask my little Cherry to come and make the rest of my life happy—please God.”

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